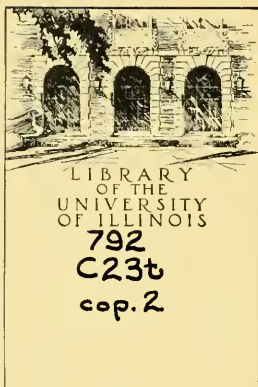


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THE THEATRE
ON THE FRONTIER



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THE FIRST THEATRE IN ST. LOUIS
(From a painting in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society)

THE THEATRE ON THE FRONTIER



THE EARLY YEARS OF THE
ST. LOUIS STAGE



BY WILLIAM G. B. CARSON



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TO MY WIFE
ELIZABETH CHAPIN CARSON

Printed by the Massachusetts Book Co., Boston, Mass.

PREFACE

IN COLLECTING material for a work of this sort one must inevitably call upon others for assistance and advice. Such has assuredly been my experience, and I cannot let this book go from my hands without acknowledging some at least of this aid. Throughout the years devoted to my research and to the actual writing of the pages which follow I have had the benefit of the sympathetic counsel of Professor George C. D. Odell of Columbia University, and from his colleague Professor Ralph Leslie Rusk I have also received valuable suggestions. To the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis I am indebted for the use of its library, its newspaper files, and the manuscripts and prompt-copies in the Gundlach Collection, without which my work could not even have been begun. I must also most gratefully acknowledge the personal assistance of Mrs. Nettie H. Beauregard, the curator and archivist who guided me through the society's collection of manuscripts, and of Miss Stella M. Drumm, the librarian, whose untiring patience and wide familiarity with the historical literature of the Louisiana Purchase proved of invaluable assistance in establishing leads which frequently led me to valuable finds.

The kindness of Mr. Sheridan S. Smith, of Webster Groves, Missouri, in placing at my disposal the great collection of documents and letters left by his grandfather, Sol Smith, has not only enabled me to unearth many details which must otherwise have remained unseen but also given me access to the records, formal and informal, written on the spot at the time by the very persons engaged, though they did not suspect it, in making the history which we are studying today. For further information concerning Sol Smith I am indebted to his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Thaddeus Smith. Miss Cornelia Maury has generously permitted me to use her portraits of

her grandfather, Mr. Matthew C. Field, and her great-grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Noah M. Ludlow. Mr. Charles R. Staples, of Lexington, Kentucky, allowed me free use of his manuscript article on "The Early Entertainments and Diversions of Lexington" and also rendered me great assistance in other ways, as has also Judge Samuel S. Wilson of the same city. To Mrs. Lillian A. Hall, custodian of the Harvard Theatre Collection, I owe the use of certain playbills quoted in my book, and to Mr. Roy Day, librarian of the Players, New York, and Mr. Otis Skinner access to the library of that club. The Columbia University Press gave me permission to quote from Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* and Rusk's *Literature of the Middle Western Frontier*. Other information I owe to Miss Leona Gray of McGill University, Montreal; Miss Emma D. Poole, librarian of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania at Pittsburgh; Miss Leila Awnspaugh of the Mobile Public Library; Miss E. Abbot of the Cincinnati Public Library; Mr. L. H. Fox of the New York Public Library; the Reverend Gilbert J. Garraghan, St. Louis University; and the Reverend John Rothensteiner, St. Louis.

Finally, in closing, I desire to express my very deep and sincere appreciation of the interest manifested in my work by my colleagues at Washington University and of the encouragement they have given me on all occasions. I am especially grateful to Professor W. R. Mackenzie and Professor George B. Parks for valuable suggestions and advice; to Professor Ralph Bieber for sharing with me his knowledge of frontier history; and to Professor Richard F. Jones for the many hours he has devoted to helping me to the solution of knotty problems and the effective presentation of my material.

As I said in beginning this acknowledgment, without this co-operation my purpose must have failed of accomplishment.

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CHAPTER I

IN THE NATURE OF A PROLOGUE

WHATEVER may have been its theatrical fortunes since, it was—I think undoubtedly—St. Louis that on January 6, 1815, witnessed the birth of the drama in the vast territory west of the Mississippi.¹ For more than a century, theatricals had been given in the cities of the original thirteen states, and commercial companies had long been fairly well established. It is no easy matter to determine definite facts concerning the early history of the theatre in this country, particularly of the amateur phase, puritanical prejudices having been sufficiently potent to draw a veil over the identity of those who had the temerity to take part and indeed over the activities themselves. But out of the obscurity, painstaking research has been able to bring certain facts to light. Just when the first play was acted in the present territory of the United States, it is impossible to tell; nor is it likely that we shall ever know. It was, however, almost certainly late in the seventeenth or early in the eighteenth century. The first extant references to theatricals in New York City are cited by Professor George C. D. Odell in his thorough and comprehensive *Annals of the New York Stage*. "Somewhere between 1699 and 1702, Richard Hunter received permission to give plays in New York; in 1703-4 Anthony Aston acted here; in 1709, play-acting was legally forbidden; on December 6, 1732, *The Recruiting Officer* was performed at the New Theatre; a map, 1732-35, shows the Playhouse in Broadway."² That other productions had been

¹ I refer here, of course, to the English drama, and do not overlook the plays given as early as 1598 in the Spanish colonies to the west. Cf. Winifred Johnston, "The Early Theatre in the Spanish Borderlands," *Mid-America*, Vol. XIII; N.S., Vol. II, No. 2.

² George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, I, 31.

given previously in Virginia or elsewhere is possible, but not probable. The Hallam family, and its associates, once believed to be the first actors to perform in the colonies, did not land from the "Charming Sally" until 1752. But, whatever may have been the date of its inception, the drama gained a foothold, and, in spite of the opposition of the Calvinistic elements of the population, the theatre, both amateur and professional, became, before many years had passed, an important source of entertainment particularly for the wealthier classes in the larger centers. The War of Independence necessarily caused some interruption in its development, but as soon as peace was restored, the interest was revived and even intensified.

With the opening of the frontier lands west of the Alleghenies, there came a great migration into the valley of the Mississippi. It was still a savage country to be braved only by the courageous and the hardy, but it was settled with great rapidity. Among the pioneers who poured down the western slopes of the mountains were hundreds of young men who carried with them a love for the drama both in book form and on the stage, and doubtless many who had actually participated in amateur performances in their native cities. Despite the rigors and privations of their new life and the dangers of their surroundings, they did not forget this love for the muses of tragedy and comedy, and it was not long before "Thespian societies," as they were termed, were springing up in these remote and rough-hewn settlements, the entire populations of which could, in many instances, be comfortably seated in some of our present-day theatres.

The earliest performances west of the mountains of which I have been able to discover any trace took place, naturally enough, in Pittsburgh, the easternmost of the western towns. A writer in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, of 1903, calls attention to a production of *Cato* (doubtless Addison's dreary tragedy) and a farce, *All the World's a Stage*, by the officers garrisoned at Fort Pitt in April, 1790. "Although Pittsburgh had at that

time less than 1,000 inhabitants there were cultured ladies and gentlemen who featured as actors and audiences.”³ By 1808, “according to old accounts there were two dramatic societies giving occasional plays in Pittsburgh. One was composed of law students and the other of respectable mechanics.”⁴ The next appearance of Thespis of which anything is known today was probably made at Detroit in 1798, eight years later, and again we find the soldiers responsible. Dr. Ralph Leslie Rusk, who in *The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier* has traced the growth of the fine arts between the Alleghenies and the Western prairies, notes a reference by Silas Farmer, in his history of Detroit and Michigan, to “military and civic entertainments, at least some of which were dramatic,” though the source of the latter’s information is uncertain.⁵ About the same time there were, Dr. Rusk has discovered, amateur performances in Lexington, Kentucky, the first specific reference being to 1799.⁶

Of the other important towns in the West, the first to show an interest in amateur theatricals was probably Cincinnati, where on October 1, 1801, . . . the “Cincinnati Theatre” was opened with the performance of O’Keeffe’s comic opera *The Poor Soldier* together with an unnamed musical interlude.⁷

It will be observed that these productions were all, it would seem at least, by amateurs. The professional players had not plunged so deep into the forest. But the actor is no laggard, and he was not far behind. Of his native temerity and perseverance, and his almost religious devotion to his art, one can find few better instances than those recorded in the personal recollections of the men who took part in these early histrionic campaigns.⁸ The second decade of the nineteenth

³ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, February, 1903. Exact date unknown. Scrap book in possession of Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Ralph Leslie Rusk, *The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier*, I, 361.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁸ See, for example, Noah M. Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*.

century witnessed the invasion of the region by groups from Montreal and Quebec, Albany, Philadelphia, and perhaps elsewhere. Naturally enough, they sought out the towns where the amateurs had preceded them and a hunger for the drama had been revealed. As they traveled, they picked up and added to their bodies histrionic various and sundry stage-struck individuals who felt the fires of genius burning within them and were convinced that it was on the stage and not in the printing-office or some other such prosaic setting that Fame was destined to find them out. The writer in the *Pittsburgh Gazette* whom I quoted above asserts that "about 1808 also occasional actors from the East began appearing in Pittsburgh but there was no regular theatre building and they had to play in halls, taverns, rooms of private residences or any other usable quarters."⁹ Lexington, according to Dr. Rusk, entertained its first professionals in 1810,¹⁰ and these soon included Frankfort and Louisville in their spheres. In Cincinnati, the professional appeared a year later.¹¹ There is no evidence of any others than amateurs in Detroit for a number of years after this, the remote location of the town being no doubt responsible. By 1815, the principal towns of the Ohio Valley were enjoying the productions of plays, and even the work of experienced actors, for by that year there were a few of them already in the field.¹² To the south, New Orleans had been for nearly a quarter of a century harboring regular performers. Alcée Fortier in his *History of Louisiana* states that among the refugees fleeing from a negro insurrection on the island of Santo Domingo in 1791 "was a troupe of comedians who gave dramatic representations, and were the first actors in Louisiana."¹³ From these towns, however, St. Louis was far removed, and between lay many miles of dangerous and

⁹ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, February, 1903. Cf. n. 3, above.

¹⁰ Rusk, *op. cit.*, I, 353.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

¹² Francis Blissett, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Drake.

¹³ Alcée Fortier, *History of Louisiana*, II, 146. These actors, of course, performed in French plays.

almost trackless wilderness. For its first taste of the delights of the theatre, it had of necessity to wait till a later date.

.

In 1815, when it witnessed its first dramatic performance, St. Louis was fifty-one years old, and had been under the American flag for a little more than a single decade. The site of the settlement had been selected by Pierre Laclede Liguist in December, 1763, and actual building begun under the supervision of his lieutenant, the boy Chouteau, in February of the following year. The territory of Louisiana was at this time, although the settlers did not know it, Spanish, and, despite the fact that in 1801 it was re-ceded to France, the Spanish governors, the first of whom had assumed command in 1769, remained in control until March, 1804, when formal possession of the region was taken by Major Amos Stoddard of the United States Army, and the dismayed citizens found themselves under another and almost wholly unwelcome alien rule.

Eleven years after the transfer, St. Louis was nothing more than a crude frontier settlement, a far-flung outpost of the civilization which was advancing past the Alleghenies and up the Mississippi from the south. Although the largest town west of the Father of Waters, it had at that time a population of only about 2,000, and the settlements beyond it were, with the exception of St. Charles, about twenty miles to the west, on a bend of the Missouri, and one or two others, simply posts for the prosecution of the Indian trade. It covered a narrow strip of land along the bank of the river from what is now Washington Avenue to the present Chouteau Avenue, a distance of about a mile. Parallel with the river ran three streets, the names of which had but recently been Anglicized from Rue Royale, Rue de l'Eglise, and Rue des Granges, to Main, Church, and Barn streets. In spite of the fact that "fruit trees and shade trees planted along the streets and around the houses . . . gave to St. Louis that charming freshness of

aspect which nature alone can bestow,"¹⁴ and that the town was "full of gardens and fruit trees, and the air in the proper season was filled with fragrance 'highly pleasing,'" ¹⁵ contemporary accounts do not give one the picture of a wholly idyllic setting. The houses were of log, mud, and stone, the more pretentious mansions of the Chouteau family being embellished, after the fashion of their New Orleans models, with broad galleries. The streets, which were cramped and narrow, were also for the most part unpaved and after dark without light. In fact, according to a writer in the *Missouri Gazette*, conditions were such that "neither paved, nor lighted, nor cleansed, St. Louis presents to the stranger . . . no inducement to remain, and to those who are its permanent inhabitants offers no comfort out of the verge of their own habitations."¹⁶

Turning from the physical aspects of the town to the people who made up its heterogeneous population, one finds interesting contrasts. St. Louis was, of course, originally a French settlement, although its government had been, for years prior to the transfer, Spanish. The inhabitants had been, for the most part, sturdy, unlettered Frenchmen, in great proportion immigrants from the Canadas, who had sought refuge there after the British acquisition of the territory east of the Mississippi. But there were some from the West Indies; some, like the Chouteau family, from New Orleans; and a few, like the Saugrains and Lucases, cultured *émigrés* from France itself. There were also, both in town and in the country beyond, a number of American pioneers. A few years before the purchase there had set in a steady flow of immigration into the region which after its annexation was at first organized as the Territory of Upper Louisiana, but which in 1812 was rechristened the Missouri Territory. According to Louis

¹⁴ Pierre Chouteau, *The Early Inhabitants, Their Manners and Customs*, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

¹⁵ Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America*, p. 291.

¹⁶ *Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser*, December 6, 1820.

Houck, these American immigrants were perhaps on the whole not all that a hundred-percenter might wish.

For the peace and quiet that prevailed in the Spanish settlements, agitations, loud and boisterous discussion of politics—national and territorial—drunkenness, profanity, abuse of constituted authority and government, the floating of fraudulent land-titles, lawyers fomenting litigation, duels, mayhem, assaults with intent to kill, and murder became the order of the day. But [he goes on to say], it would be a mistake . . . to suppose that at that time there were not many refined and intelligent residents of the new territory. St. Louis, especially, possessed a refined and cultivated society.¹⁷

With the passing of the years, the immigration gained new impetus, and Americans crossed the river in ever increasing numbers, some to stop in St. Louis, Ste. Genevieve, or Cape Girardeau, on the west bank, others to push on into the beautiful wilderness beyond, which, in the aftermath of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, was gradually being opened up. In 1811, H. M. Brackenridge wrote: "St. Louis contains according to the last census (1810), 1,400 inhabitants. One-fifth Americans and about 400 people of color. There are a few Indians and metiffs, in the capacity of servants, or wives to boatmen."¹⁸ Yet the old French stock was still potent. In 1818, according to John F. Darby, about two-thirds of the inhabitants were French and one-third American. "The prevailing language of the white persons in the streets was French,"¹⁹ and as late as 1820, there were sufficient Frenchmen in Missouri to warrant the translations of the Missouri constitution into the French language.²⁰

In the second decade of the nineteenth century St. Louis was probably the most isolated community of its rank in the United States. There was no other town of equal size within several hundred miles. The chief avenue of approach was the

¹⁷ Louis Houck, *A History of Missouri*, III, 55-57.

¹⁸ H. M. Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, pp. 122-24.

¹⁹ John F. Darby, *Personal Recollections*, p. 5.

²⁰ Floyd Shoemaker, *Missouri's Struggle for Statehood*, p. 173.

Mississippi, up which travelers were cordelled from New Orleans, or from the mouth of the Ohio which they had descended usually by flatboat. The first steamboat did not come until 1817. Journeys were long and fraught with hardship and danger.

In 1811 it took Stephen Hempstead from the 12th day of April to June 13th to make the journey from New London, Connecticut, to St. Louis, traveling all the time. Rev. John M. Peck consumed nearly a month passing through Pennsylvania when he came west in 1818, and, reaching the Ohio on the 10th of September, he did not arrive in St. Louis until December 1st.²¹

Moreover, the town was surrounded by a savage wilderness. To the east lay Illinois, sparsely settled, where the red man still appeared from time to time on marauding expeditions, and to venture any distance to the west or north was to take one's life in one's hands. The issues of the *Gazette* prior to 1816 carry unnumbered accounts of Indian depredations in the surrounding country, and, indeed, occasions were not wanting when the citizens felt none too safe from the tomahawk and the scalping-knife in their very homes. It did not tax the memories of the older inhabitants to recall the famous Indian attack of 1780, when a number of St. Louisans were massacred while attending to their crops. The last issues of the *Gazette* in 1811 are full of King Philip's War and discuss precautions against a threatened attack by the dreaded Tecumseh. The War of 1812 brought upon the little town the very serious menace of an attack by the aboriginal allies of the British. The *Gazette* of February 20, 1813, contains the report of a committee of prominent citizens advising that the town put itself in a state of defense, and subsequent issues describe in vivid detail the operations of the redskins to the east and north. In fact there are accounts of Indian outrages in almost every issue. In 1814, one Eugene Leitensdorfer, of whom more hereafter, was compelled to leave his home about twelve miles west of town as "his wife grew timid by the

²¹ Houck, *op. cit.*, III, 197-98.

frequent murders perpetrated by the savages.”²² After the close of the war, however, these distressing items almost disappear from the press.

✓ [Nor was life in the town itself free from the turbulent features apt to characterize frontier communities. It was the day of superlatives both of praise and of damnation. Of moderation there was little, as a perusal of the newspapers will reveal. There were many causes of disagreement, feeling ran high, and the crudest personalities were indulged in by irate editors and correspondents.] Duels were so frequent that the usual scene of these often fatal encounters was frankly known as Bloody Island. These affairs of honor were by no means furtive, practically the whole populace knowing of them in advance and many of the citizens crowding the banks of the river to see what they could make out by straining their eyes across the muddy waters. Murders were common. Slavery flourished, and the papers carried notices of sales and countless advertisements informing the public of the escape of desirable negroes.

For all this, life was not without its pleasanter side. From the first, it would seem that there was what is known as “society,” originating no doubt among the cultured French. Writing of a visit to the village as early as 1807, Christian Schultz asserts that “the ladies of St. Louis were celebrated through all the lower country for their beauty, modesty, and agreeable manners as well as for their taste and the splendor of their dress.”²³ Turning again to Brackenridge, we find:

“The manners of the inhabitants are not different from those of other villages; we distinctly see the character of the ancient inhabitants, and of the new residents, and of a compound of both. St. Louis, however, was always a place of more refinement and fashion, it is the residence of many genteel families, both French and American.”²⁴ “Their amusements were cards, billiards, and dances; this last, of course the favorite. The dances were cotillions, reels, and sometimes the minuet. During the Carnival the balls

²² *Mo. Gaz.*, October 12, 1814.

²³ Christian Schultz, *Travels*, II, 41.

²⁴ Brackenridge, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

follow in rapid succession. . . . Children have also their balls, and are taught a decorum and propriety of behavior, which is preserved through life. They have a certain ease and freedom of address, and are taught the secret of real politeness, self-denial. . . . The American costume is generally introduced . . . I never saw anywhere greater elegance of dress than at the balls of St. Louis."²⁵

These balls remained for years the chief form of amusement for the upper classes. George Sibley, writing to his brother in 1816, observes that "our dancing assemblies last winter were well attended from 40 to 75 ladies and as many Gentlemen, American and French in about equal proportions."²⁶

[One would expect the gaiety-loving French with their national penchant for the theatre to have early introduced into their social life some form of dramatic entertainment. Yet painstaking search through all available records has failed to unearth any reference to theatricals prior to 1815. The reason for this is probably to be found in the somewhat primitive and very unimaginative character of most of the early French settlers. Of cultured persons who would be interested there were too few to make the introduction of this form of diversion feasible or indeed even possible. There was opposed to it also the very powerful influence of the church. It is true that plays were given, that there were even companies of professional actors, in New Orleans. But New Orleans was a large and wicked city, and St. Louis was a small and struggling settlement, and more completely under the domination of the ascetic Gallican fathers, whose attitude was voiced by Benedicte Flaget, later first Bishop of Louisville, in a letter written in 1816 on the question of the choice of a seat for the newly established diocese.

As the location of the see will mainly depend on the recommendation which we, Mgr. DuBourg and myself will make, I am

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

²⁶ George C. Sibley to Samuel Sibley, Fort Osage, September 28, 1816, Mo. Hist. Soc.

determined to oppose, with all my power, the selection of St. Louis, if it be true what has been written me, that a theatre was opened there, which must neutralize the efforts of even the most zealous and holy Bishop—Indeed, what would it profit a prelate to inveigh ever so earnestly against the vanities, luxuries and intrigues, when the play-actors may preach in principle and in practice, the intrigues, luxuries, and vanities of the world? That would mean to mingle light with darkness, truth with falsehood, Belial with the God of Israel, and to that I could never give my consent.²⁷

These two factors are, I think, sufficient to explain the absence of theatrical activity among the early French. With the growth of the town, however, and the great influx of Americans and other foreigners, the influence of the fathers was weakened, especially as the Protestant congregations were for years neither many nor considerable. The young Americans, coming from the East where the production of plays had been in vogue for years, very naturally turned to it in an effort to impart variety to the social life of the community, and it was these young men, both amateurs and professionals, who planted the first seeds of the English drama in the vast regions of the Louisiana Purchase. }

²⁷ February 8, 1816, to Father Olivier, missionary in Ste. Genevieve (translated by Rev. John Rothensteiner, *St. Louis Diocesan Archives*).

CHAPTER II

AMATEUR NIGHTS, 1814-17

THE first reference to the existence of a theatre which I have uncovered is a brief account in the *Gazette* of February 8, 1812, of the famous theatre fire in Richmond, which is described more fully two weeks later.¹ In a letter dated August 7, 1813, from Christian Wilt to his brother Andrew, in which he discusses the fortunes of their general store, he laments: "I have . . . more plays of one kind (Love's labour lost) than I ever expect to sell." On the same day he wrote to his uncle and backer in Philadelphia in the midst of an account of a threatened Indian attack: "—must beg you not to send me so much of unsaleable articles—I have more Loves labour lost than I shall sell for 50 years in this place." The uncle replied advising that he sell what he could and use the rest for wrapping paper.²

The *Missouri Gazette* of January 15, 1814, carries the first reference so far discovered to any sort of public performance in the town of St. Louis. Under the head of "Sporting," Eugene Leitensdorfer announces that he

will on Saturday next if the weather permits, or on Monday next, open in the house of Joseph Robidoux, lately occupied by H. Austin, A Spectacle of Recreative Sports of Mathematicks and Phisicks in which the following will be exhibited: Several new and interesting tricks of slight of hand, more ingenious than were ever made in Europe, amongst which are, THE MAGIC PICTURE, MOSES' ROD, DANCING EGGS.

The Egyptian Prophet, Hubdala Rackmany, Automaton of about three feet high who precisely foretells all cards which can be drawn from a pack by any person present.

The Enchanted Pistol. E. L. by any person present will cause a

¹ *Mo. Gaz.*, February 22, 1812.

² *Letter-books of Christian Wilt and Joseph Hertzog*, Mo. Hist. Soc.

card to be torn; this person shall preserve only one piece of the said card, the remaining pieces but the one above mentioned, will be burnt and the ashes put into a pistol loaded by said E. L., the drawer of the card or any other will fire the pistol in the breast of said E. L. and the card except the remaned piece will appear on his breast; to do away all doubts of juggling the said E. L. will cause his hands to be tied behind his back.

He will also perform other interesting sports too long to detail here.

The performance will end by placing a burning coal on his foot, throwing it up and taking it in his mouth, and eat it with as much facility as our young gentlemen and ladies would sugar-plimbs [*sic*—this he will repeat several times.

EUGENE LEITENSORFER hopes the public's indulgence on this first exhibition that he is not as well prepared as he will be in the future, on account of the misfortunes that have befallen him, but still at the same time that with encouragement, he will be able to exhibit a number of things very amusing and interesting to the public which he cannot perform at present for want of means.

The exhibition will commence at seven o'clock P.M.

The price of admission will be 50 cents for grown persons, and 25 cents for children under twelve years old.

N.B. Those who will have tickets shall have preference to the seats, over those who will pay at their entrance.³

On the twenty-fourth of the following December (1814) "the said E. L." evidently regaled the public with another performance. On December 17, the *Gazette* carried an advertisement for such an exhibition, in which he promised that among other things he would permit any member of his audience "to cut off the head of a living chicken, and then he will immediately restore it to life with its head on."⁴

The following amusing account of one of Leitensdorfer's entertainments is taken from Edwards' *Great West*.

He announced to the company that he would raise a chicken from an egg, and, after it was full-grown, would cook and serve it up to the company. The audience were highly pleased with the announcement of this favorite trick, and watched the proceedings with much interest. The egg was first shown to the company,

³ *Mo. Gaz.*, January 15, 1814.

⁴ *Ibid.*, December 17, 1814.

placed in a little box that was emptied, then the box was closed, and straightway was heard the complaining notes of a young chicken; and, on opening the box, lo! a young chicken was found. It was transferred to another box, closed up, and immediately reopened, and the chicken had become big enough to make a good broil for breakfast. It underwent quite a number of changes, growing larger each time, until it had reached the size of a full-grown chicken. Then the head was cut off before the company, and the body, head and all placed on a dish, and, after being transferred to a box, from which it was taken a few minutes afterward, cooked to a beautiful brown, and swimming in gravy, from which a most inviting flavor emanated. The magician invited one of the company to carve the chicken, as he intended that the audience should partake of the fowl, and judge of the merits of the cooking. Judge Wm. C. Carr, then a young attorney, took the knife and fork that was handed to him, and was on the point of using the latter in transfixing the breast of the chicken, when, to the utter astonishment of all, there was a convulsive movement in the dish, and a live chicken flew from it on the sort of stage that had been erected, causing the gravy to splash considerably over the young lawyer.⁵

Elsewhere in the same book we find this commentary upon the magician's local success.

It is said that Colonel Leistendorfer [*sic*] had no cause to regret his visit to St. Louis, and when he departed, after a protracted stay of three months, his pockets were well filled with the pure Mexican coin, and he enjoyed the reputation of being either Old Nick himself, who by some device had escaped from his fiery regions, or else he was on terms of the closest intimacy with that individual, as astonishing were the wonders he performed.⁶

The history of the theatre in St. Louis introduces us to no other such astonishing person as Mr. Leitensdorfer. The *Gazette* of October 22, 1814, displays a three-column account of his life, which would put to blush the most imaginative adventurers of history and romance. It seems that he was born in 1772 near Trent in the Tyrol and that his real name was not Leitensdorfer after all, but Gerrasio Probasio Santuari. According to this biography, which he afterward said was not wholly authentic, he had led a most exciting life as a soldier

⁵ Edwards, *Great West*, p. 593.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

of fortune, principally in the Near East. He served various people at various times as soldier, engineer, farmer, tradesman, shoemaker, map-maker, bird-catcher, interpreter, spy, Capuchin monk, Jewish rabbi, and even Mohammedan dervish. Having fallen in with some American officers in Tripoli, he came to this country, and served for a time as "surveyor of public buildings in Washington, D.C." Finally he settled down in Carondelet, a village a few miles south of St. Louis, which was later incorporated with the larger city. Occasionally we find him emerging from his retirement to advertise in the *Gazette* that his misfortunes would require him to appear before the public again, usually giving costume-recitals on the subject of his adventures. He finally died in 1845.⁷ We cannot, perhaps, class him formally among the legitimate actors, but one is tempted to wonder if he did not deserve the title more than some of those who followed him before the public and claimed it in rhetorical "puffs." At all events he was a colorful figure in colorful times, and, so far as records show, the first individual to appear upon the stage in the city.

One week after Leitensdorfer's second appearance, the *Gazette* printed the following announcement: "Theatre. Will be presented on Friday evening 6th, January, 1815, at the Court House, a comedy called the *School for Authors*, to which will be added the much admired farce of the *Budget of Blunders*. For particulars see bills."⁸ This is the first reference extant to any theatrical representation in St. Louis, or, so far as I know, west of the Mississippi River. That it actually came off as advertised is proved by an account of the performance which appeared in the same newspaper on February 4, 1815.

A number of the young gentlemen of St. Louis, having raised a dramatic corps, made their debut in the performance of the comedy of the *School for Authors*, with the farce *Budget of Blunders*. Much curiosity was excited and a great many attended to witness the *blunders*;—but all were pleased—all were surprised to see

⁷ *Daily Missouri Republican*, March 14, 1845.

⁸ *Mo. Gaz.*, December 31, 1814.

tacticians in a parcel of recruits. On thursday the admired comedy of "Who Wants a Guinea" was presented to a crowded house; and the lovers of the drama were again gratified in beholding the principal characters well filled, and it was the general opinion that Messrs. B—s (?), S—n, P—e, K—y, B—t, H—l, B—d, B—y, and P—es would grace a city theatre.⁹

The names of most of these young aspirants can only be guessed at, and it will probably never be known to whom belongs the credit for the first introduction of the drama into St. Louis.

Fortunately, there is no mystery connected with the humble structure which served as the first court house in this city and saw the birth of the drama west of the Mississippi. It was, as described by F. L. Billon, in his *Annals of St. Louis*, "a large one-story frame built by James Baird¹⁰ for a blacksmith's shop in 1811, on the west side of 3rd below Spruce. It had a front of almost 40 feet, with a depth of 80 feet."¹¹ Billon does not give his source, and his dependability has been challenged in other matters, but that this building was used as a theatre was common knowledge; and there is, moreover, in the *Gazette* of January 18, 1812, an advertisement in which James Beard (Baird) begs leave "to inform his friends and the publick, that he has removed his Blacksmith Shop to the premises formerly owned and occupied by John Coons." Thomas Scharf, in his *History of St. Louis*, in a list of frame buildings constructed after 1804, confirms these facts and locates the blacksmith shop definitely in Block 80.¹² Richard Dowling, who is quoted by Scharf, asserted that "it [the

⁹ Because of the interest they subsequently displayed in the theatre, I hazard the guess that among the young gentlemen were: the Kennerly brothers (merchants, traders), John Brady (Irish merchant), Robert (?) Simpson (doctor), and Christopher Price (merchant).

¹⁰ In 1812 Baird was one of a party which left St. Louis for Santa Fe. They were arrested and held as prisoners at Chihuahua for nine years, and Baird died at El Paso in 1826 without having returned to St. Louis (James, *Three Years among the Indians and Mexicans* [Walter B. Douglas, ed.], pp. 292-93).

¹¹ F. L. Billon, *Annals of St. Louis in Its Territorial Days, 1804-1821*, p. 74.

¹² Thomas Scharf, *History of St. Louis, City and County*, I, 152.

smithy] was the largest room in the city and was therefore in demand for balls, Fourth of July dinners, etc.”¹³ Billon goes on to say:

They [the young actors] procured the use of this building, closed the large door, the only opening in front, opened a new side entrance through the vacant lot on the north, erected a small stage at the west end, with seats in front rising gradually back to the front of the building, and this was the *Theatre* for a number of years.

As usual he gives no source for his information.¹⁴

Apparently the young actors met with success sufficient to spur them to further artistic endeavors, for on February 25, 1815, the *Gazette* advertised a performance of “the celebrated comedy called *The Heir at Law* to which will be added the much admired Farce called *Fortune’s Frolic* or *the True Use of Riches* to be given Saturday evening, 4th March.” For Friday, March 31, “the favorite comedy of the *Poor Gentleman*, with the afterpiece of *Hit or Miss*” was announced.¹⁵

There follows practically an entire year during which no mention is made of the drama. The *Gazette* of February 10, 1816, however, carries the following notice:

The members of the Roscian Society, regret to inform the public that in consequence of the serious indisposition of one of the performers, their next representation is unavoidably postponed until Saturday evening the 17th inst. when they will present Homes celebrated Tragedy in Five acts, called *Douglas* to which will be added the much admired Farce in two acts, called *Darkness Visible*. Never attempted here.

The wording of this advertisement would seem to imply that there had been other performances recently. It is quite possible that there were other notices in the *Gazette* during the months intervening, as the file in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society contains several seriously mutilated numbers, and indeed is not wholly complete. On October 12, 1816, we learn that the smithy-courthouse-theatre

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹⁴ Billon, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

¹⁵ *Mo. Gaz.*, March 25, 1815.

was serving also as a place of worship, the *Gazette* for that date announcing that on the morrow the "Rev. Mr. Brown from Virginia will perform divine service at the Theatre." It is interesting to note that, although still occupied by the court, the structure was known as "the Theatre." Not until December 18 next do we find any further dramatic data. On that date, the *Gazette* announced that the Thespian Society would present "on Monday evening next the play called *Lovers Vows* and the farce *Killing No Murder*" and that "excellent music" had been provided. "Doors to open at half-past five, and performance to commence at half-past six o'clock. Tickets to be had at Mr. James Kennerly's store and at the Post Office, on the day preceding, and at the bar of the Theatre on the evening of the performance. Price one dollar—children half price." This production was quickly followed by two others: *Secrets Worth Knowing* and *The Agreeable Surprise*, advertised for January 16, 1817,¹⁶ and *Douglas* again, with the farce *Who's the Dupe?* for January 25.¹⁷

By way of variety the good citizens were treated, if the advertisements in the *Gazette* of January 25, 1817, may be credited, to at least four exhibitions of wire-dancing and "ballancing" in "Mr. Everheart's room." Furthermore, on Saturday evening, March 1 (1817), there was "performed a Grand Concert of Music by Messrs. Thomas and Souther, assisted by several amateurs."¹⁸ With such varied entertainments was brought to a close the first, the exclusively amateur, period in the theatrical history of St. Louis. With the year 1818 enter the first professional, or quasi-professional, actors.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, January 11, 1817.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, January 18, 1817.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, February 22, 1817.

CHAPTER III

“PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!” 1818-19

THE Steamboat arrived Here yesterday, and Brought a Company of players who will perform in the old Theatre this winter.” So wrote Mrs. Ann Hunt to her father, Judge J. B. C. Lucas, on January 4, 1818.¹ It is to be regretted that the writer did not go into further detail, but, as it is, her casual observation is of no slight significance in the history of the St. Louis stage. It establishes definitely the date of the arrival of the little band of players who were almost certainly the first professional actors to invade the Great West and, as will be shown presently, it helps to determine their status in the pioneer theatre of their day. The little company, we know, was under the management of a William A. Turner, who had for a number of years been playing an important part in the theatrical life of towns to the east, and whose wife Sophia was its bright and particular star.

Noah M. Ludlow in his *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, a lengthy volume, which, in spite of inaccuracies, is well-nigh invaluable in the history of the American stage, makes the following rather derogatory comments upon the Turners and their season in St. Louis. After referring to their having had a company in Cincinnati, he says that Turner told him then, in 1817, that he planned

to abandon theatricals and return to the East. This latter course, it seems, he did not pursue, but abandoning management, took his wife and family to St. Louis, with a view, as I was told, of ascertaining whether it might not be a desirable point at which to establish himself in his original business, which was, I think, book-binding or printing. Shortly after arriving in St. Louis, Mr. John

¹ Mrs. Ann Hunt to Judge J. B. C. Lucas, January 4, 1818. Copy, Mo. Hist. Soc.

H. Vos came there from Louisville, they became acquainted, and neither being overstocked with cash, concluded to get up, jointly, the best kind of public entertainment in a theatrical way that was possible, with their very limited numbers. Their effective force consisted of Mrs. Turner, a clever actress; Mrs. Vos, an almost entire novice; Mr. Vos, not much practiced, but possessing a good share of natural talent; and Miss Emma Turner, a promising girl of almost twelve years of age. Mr. Turner, I believe, sometimes went on the stage, but was no actor. They procured an old building that stood on the square bounded by Third and Fourth, Spruce and Almond Streets. . . . Into this building they put seats. Mr. Vos painted a few scenes for it, and they performed, with the aid of two amateurs found in the city, ten or twelve nights, finally giving it up, the support not being sufficient. Now this certainly could not be called a *regular* dramatic company. The above information I received from Mr. Vos, some time after my opening in St. Louis in 1819, and the same has been recently confirmed by a gentleman who is now and has been living in St. Louis since 1810.²

This account is certainly inaccurate in several respects. Ludlow implies that the Turners were the first to give plays in the "old theatre," unquestionably the court house, whereas we know that the amateurs had performed in it at least three years before. Furthermore, there is good evidence that they came to St. Louis, not in order that the *pater familias* might "establish himself in his original business . . . book-binding or printing," but in order to produce plays, and also that they did not come alone. In Bishop Spalding's biography of Bishop Flaget, the prelate who a year or two before had inveighed so heartily against the opening of a theatre in St. Louis, there is quoted a letter written by the latter in which he describes a trip down the Ohio and up the Mississippi at the close of the year 1817 in a boat, among the passengers of which were a company of comedians. The boat was the "Piqua," and it reached Ste. Genevieve, about sixty miles below St. Louis, December 30, six days prior to the date of the arrival of the comedians mentioned by Mrs. Hunt. Hence they must almost certainly have been the same. The bishop

² Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, p. 186.

tells of returning to the boat after spending Christmas ashore to find "the comedians performing a play—that is, engaged in a general fight among themselves—until they were separated by the captain."³ We see by this that they were known on the boat as "the comedians." Yet according to Ludlow they did not pick up their associates till they reached the city. Furthermore we know that the day after they landed they were known to Mrs. Hunt as "a Company of players who will perform in the old Theatre." Dr. Rusk, commenting upon Ludlow's comment, makes this observation:

Ludlow's account is very likely correct so far as the financial results of the season are concerned, and there is at least a possibility that his report of the numbers of performances is fairly accurate. But he is plainly in error when he describes the company as made up of four effective players and two amateurs; for, whatever the relative numbers of the effectives and the amateurs, there are no less than sixteen actors named in the bills. It is very questionable whether the hastily assembled company [Ludlow's own] brought to St. Louis nearly two years later, which consisted, by the time the theatre opened, of fifteen persons, according to Ludlow's own account, including Mr. and Mrs. Vos and Mr. King, had a better right to the name of "regular dramatic company."⁴

The Turners were English actors who had been in this country for several years. Mrs. Turner had appeared in many theatres from Montreal⁵ to Kentucky,⁶ including the famous Park Theatre in New York.⁷ Her husband had been a pioneer manager in Pittsburgh,⁸ Lexington, whence he had been driven out by Samuel Drake, a stronger rival,⁹ and Cincin-

³ M. S. Spalding, *Sketches of the Life, Times and Character of the Rt. Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget, First Bishop of Louisville*, p. 173.

⁴ Rusk, *The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier*, I, 375 n.

⁵ F. T. Graham, *Histrionic Montreal*, pp. 27-28.

⁶ Rusk, *op. cit.*, I, 353.

⁷ Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, II, 283, 309.

⁸ Sarah Killikelly, *History of Pittsburgh, Its Rise and Progress*, p. 529; *Pittsburgh Mercury*, September 23, 1813.

⁹ According to the records of the Fayette Circuit and County Court, April 7, 1818, Turner sought redress from the law.

nati.¹⁰ So far as their talents are concerned, we can only draw our own conclusions from the opinions of those who saw their work, but we do know that they were by no means lacking in experience.

The performances were given in the old court house, but evidently it was already being found too inconvenient because Colonel Charles Keemle, a newspaper man who soon became interested in local theatrical ventures, is quoted in Wild's *The Valley of the Mississippi* to the effect that they occasionally used the loft over the stable attached to the Green Tree Tavern.¹¹ Perhaps this rather surprising place had already been used by the Roscian Society, and it was for this reason that Mrs. Hunt referred to the smithy-court-house-church as the "old Theatre." Just when the season opened cannot now be determined, but the *Missouri Gazette* of February 20 gave space to a lengthy and rhetorical "Theatrical Communication" signed "A Stranger" which not only tells us of one particular production but also throws light on the style of acting offered for public delectation. "It is peculiarly gratifying," observes the critic,

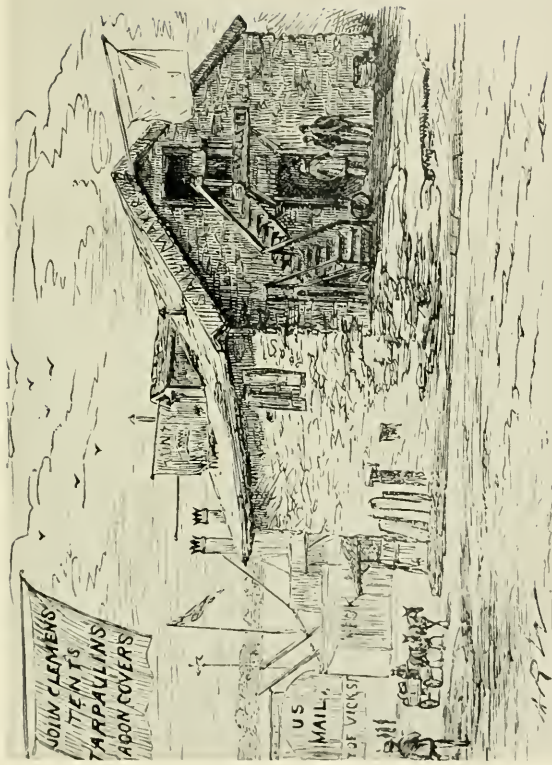
to find remote from an Atlantic city, an amusement so rational and refined as the theatre, supported by the taste and liberality of an enlightened public. I could not but feel extremely pleased with the order and decorum universally observed by the audience and the silent and respectful attention it is accustomed to bestow on the performance. They are strongly calculated to produce on the mind of the stranger an impression highly favorable to good taste, sense and refinement of the inhabitants of St. Louis.

The plays on this occasion were R. C. Maturin's melodrama of *Bertram* or *The Castle of St. Aldobrand* and the *Mock Doctor*, presumably Fielding's adaptation of Moliere's *Le Médecin malgré lui*.

The part of Bertram was ably supported by Mr. Henry, who particularly excelled in those parts of the tragedy, where the expres-

¹⁰ Rusk, *op. cit.*, I, 374.

¹¹ Thomas and Wild, *The Valley of the Mississippi*, p. 24.



Green Tree Tavern, Levee and Chesnut.

THE GREEN TREE TAVERN

(From a drawing in *Saint Louis Illustrated*)

sion of heart-rending agony and despair was required. . . . Those faults which are observable in his performance, are not attributable to any want of talent, but to a want of experience. When time and practice have strengthened his voice, and enables him to give it a greater degree of flexibility, and when study shall still further improve his gestures, attitudes and the management of his body (which may be done with little exertion) Mr. H. would be a valuable acquisition to any theatre in the Union.

Of one "Mr. James" he observes that he is "deficient in confidence, he uses too little gesture, and his stage tread wants firmness and grace." Mr. D'Grushe is described as "respectable"; since he was playing the Prior, that would seem to be fortunate. (He also sang a song, "Giles Scroggins' Ghost.") "But," goes on the chronicler,

the chief attraction of the evening was Mrs. Turner's Imogine. . . . The more I see of this ladies acting, the more I am pleased with it. With all the advantages of a personal beauty and a finished education, her long experience enables her to fill with credit every department of the drama, and to feel at home in whatever she performs. Her Imogine presented a lively picture of a chaste and honorable woman, whose excessive sensibility and high-wrought enthusiasm, drives her down the rough tide of calamity, till she is dashed to pieces on the rock of her own distempered feelings. The passions that tortured the heart of Imogine are such that no woman can endure and live. The progress of her sufferings from grief to despair, from despair to frenzy, and from frenzy to death, was sketched with a boldness of coloring, and a felicity of execution which evinced Mrs. T's deep knowledge of the human heart, and her admirable skill in controlling pulsations.¹²

One wonders if one is encountering here the first dramatic critic or the first press agent.

No further reference to the activities of the Turners, father, mother, son, and daughter plus their associates, has been found until the April following. There may have been other performances, as at least two numbers of the *Gazette* in the Missouri Historical Society file are badly mutilated and one is entirely missing. The society has, however, a playbill an-

¹² *Mo. Gaz.*, February 20, 1818.

nouncing a production to be given April 9. The tragedy was Southerne's *Isabella* or *The Fatal Marriage* "for the last time," the afterpiece *'Tis All a Farce* by Allingham. Between the two, one of the actors sang Burns' "Farewell," Miss Turner danced, and Mr. D'Grushe contributed a comic song. The price of admission was one dollar, children half-price. "The curtain will *positively* rise in future at 7 o'clock, that the performance may be over at a reasonable hour."

It will be noticed that there are in this bill two phrases which imply that the company had not been idle during the interim between *Bertram* on February 17 and *Isabella*, or indeed between their arrival and the production of the former tragedy. It is asserted that on this occasion *Isabella* is to be presented *for the last time* and that in future the curtain will rise at seven. Just how long the troupe remained in St. Louis cannot be definitely ascertained, but a performance is advertised for a date so late as July 29. Nor can we tell how often they appeared. The newspapers are not of very great assistance, for some performances were not advertised—for instance, *Bertram* and *Isabella*—and, moreover, of some of the issues there are apparently no copies extant. There are no notices of any dramatic activity during the month of May, and yet on the twenty-second of that month a Mr. Potter advertised in the *Gazette* for a red morocco pocket-book "lost on Tuesday evening last (May 19), at the Theatre." On April 10, we find that "Mr. Martin respectfully informs the citizens, that in consequence of one of the performers departure eastward, his benefit will positively take place on Saturday evening, April 11, when will be presented Holcroft's celebrated comedy in five acts, called *The Road to Ruin*." Master Turner's benefit—"last night but three"—is announced for Friday evening, April 24, with Lillo's *George Barnwell* "performed in every theatre in the world, as a *lesson for youth*," and the "admired Farce, called THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD." Whether the youthful star aspired, like so many of his con-

Mr. Wallace's Benefit.

THEATRE

On THURSDAY EVENING April 9,

Will be presented (for the last time) a celebrated TRAGEDY, in five acts, written by G. J. WALLACE, CALLED

Isabella,

OR, THE FATAL MARRIAGE.

Biron	Ms. HENRY,	Sampson	SMITH,
Carlos	MARTIN,	Pedro	GUTHRIE,
Villero	JAMES,	Nurse	
Count Baldwin	BLYTHE,	Isabella	Mrs. TURNER,
Belford	TURNER,	Isabella's Child	Mrs. TURNER.

END OF THE PLAY.



Mr. Henry, Martin, James, Blythe, Turner, Sampson, Pedro, Nurse, Isabella, Isabella's Child, Mrs. Turner, Mrs. Guthrie.

Mr. Wallace, Mrs. Turner, Mrs. Guthrie, Mr. Martin.

After which, a popular new FARCE, is performed in the city Theatre with unbounded applause, CALLED

'TIS ALL A FARCE.

Don Cortez	Ms. BLYTHE,	Sticks	SMITH,
Colonel Belgarde	HENRY,	bergeant	MARTIN,
Don Tony	WALLACE,	Nunpo	
Don Alphonso	JAMES,	Caroline	Mrs. TURNER.
Martillo	TURNER,		

TICKETS, one dollar each, to be had of Mr. HULL, Main-street, and at the Bar of the Theatre. Children, with families, not exceeding twelve years of age, fifty cents. Money will not be taken at the door.

* The Curtain will probably rise in future, at 7 o'clock, that the performance may be over at a reasonable hour.

B. Lewis, April 5, 1818.

G. BERRY, PRINTER, ST. LOUIS.

PLAYBILL ADVERTISING A PERFORMANCE BY THE TURNER COMPANY IN 1818, IN THE POSSESSION OF THE MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

temporaries, to the rôle of the hapless apprentice or was content to be a babe in the wood, we are not informed.

The advertisement for the bill of July 4 is too good to be passed over. It is headed flamboyantly, “American Independence. In Honor of the Day,” and announces that on that evening “will be presented, Edward Hook’s very celebrated *Melo Drama*, as performed at least fifty nights in the Theatres, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, with unprecedented applause, CALLED TEKELI OR, THE SIEGE ON MONGATZ (with appropriate scenery and music).” The cast, which for the first time is given in full, introduces several new names: Hungarians—Count Tekeli, Vos; Wolf, Henry; Conrad, D’Grushe; Isidore, King; Alexina, Mrs. Turner; Christina, Mrs. Vos; Austrians—Count Caraffa, Peyton; Edmund, James; Bras de Fer, Martin; Maurice, Maud; Rosabelle, Miss Turner; to say nothing of the anonymous supers who cared for “Frank, Officers, and Counsellors.” After the play, the audience was treated to a “Patriotic Address, as the genius of America—Mrs. Turner” and a “Song, ‘Who’ll Serve the States?’ Mr. King.” The entertainment concluded with “an admired patriotic piece, called ‘YANKEE CHRONOLOGY,’ or ‘HUZZA FOR THE CONSTITUTION,’ recording the principal naval and military events of the late war,” the work of William Dunlap, the celebrated American playwright and erstwhile manager of the Park Theatre in New York. “In front of the theatre will be exhibited an elegant transparency representing the Genius of America crowning with laurels the tomb of the immortal Washington,” doubtless the work of Vos, who painted scenery as well as acted, and who was, according to Ludlow, primarily a house and sign painter. The next performance was Mrs. Vos’s benefit, “SHAKESPEAR’S celebrated historical Tragedy, in *five acts*, CALLED ‘KING HENRY IV,’ or ‘THE HUMORS OF SIR JOHN FALSTAFF’”—this on July 25. There were to be songs for good measure and “the admired farce of ‘THE INTRIGUING VALET.’” I give the cast of the former, taking it from the *Gazette*. King Henry IV, King;

Henry, Prince of Wales, James; Prince John, Miss Turner; Hotspur, Vos; Wooster [*sic*], D'Grushe; Northumberland, Pelham; Blunt, Wallace; Vernon, Turner; Douglas, Peyton; Falstaff, Henry; Poins, Martin; Bardolph, Luckey; Gadshill, Guthrie; Peto, Master Maud; Lady Percy, Mrs. Turner; Dame Quickly, Mrs. Vos. The last appearance of this company, of which we have any record, was made (presumably—we have only the advertisement to go by) in *Richard III* and *Raising the Wind* "for the benefit of Mr. Vos."¹³ After this the troupe disappeared as a unit from St. Louis (and indeed, according to Dr. Rusk, from the Middle West),¹⁴ although three of the individual members—Mr. and Mrs. Vos and Mr. King—we shall meet again.

This account of the season of 1818, such as it was, is sufficient to show that Ludlow is in serious error in his version of the composition of the company. How far wrong he is in his estimation of the artistic merits of the various players we cannot today determine, but I suspect that he is not seriously so; they were probably about on a par with those of his own company which he shepherded hither two years later. Except for the Turners and the three who lingered on to participate in later St. Louis theatricals, I have been able to find no trace of any of them in any records of the American stage. Their names seem to have been "writ in water." It is certainly quite possible that they were, some of them, local amateurs. Paxton's *St. Louis Directory*, published 1821 (the earliest), contains the names of one Henry, two Martins, one Wallace, and nine Smiths. Any one of these may have been involved, and in the case of one the chances are at least fair that he was. This was Isaac N. Henry, editor of the *Enquirer*. According to his death-notice in that paper, January 6, 1821, he was a native of Tennessee who had "emigrated to this state about three years since," the very time of Turner's arrival, and, Ludlow states, apropos of his invasion of the city, that he had been then referred to Henry as one who was familiar

¹³ *Ibid.*, July 24, 1818.

¹⁴ Rusk, *op. cit.*, I, 375.

with theatrical conditions in the town. Ludlow adds that the young editor—he was only twenty-two—informed him that there had never been a theatrical company in St. Louis, but this remark need not, under the circumstances, be taken seriously, sixty years having elapsed since the conversation between the two young men. Moreover, the "Stranger" in his review of *Bertram* speaks of Henry as a novice. But all this is at best mere surmise. These pioneers were probably but "poor players, who strutted and fretted their hour upon the stage and then were heard no more." Can we then remember them as "the first regular company" to cross the Mississippi? If Ludlow's associates had been a little better, perhaps not. But it is difficult to draw fine lines of distinction between the "regularities" of those pioneering troupes. If we were strict, the palm could be awarded to neither. And after all there was "Mrs. T."

"Regulars" or "irregulars," the Turner contingent went its way. But one very positive benefit accrued from their engagement. This was a real, if a very rough and primitive, theatre. The inconveniences to which doubtless both the actors and the audience were subjected in the ex-blacksmith shop probably convinced the local lovers of the drama that a more suitable building was needed. Accordingly on May 25, 1818, fifteen prominent citizens joined with Turner¹⁵ in signing a covenant in which they declared that

they did subscribe to a paper for the purpose of building a Theatre, and by the said covenant appointed Thomas Hempstead, John W. Thompson, and Christopher M. Price managers of said Theatre, and did thereby authorize the said managers to purchase a lot for the purpose of erecting a theatre thereon, and that it should be applied to no other purpose unless by consent of a majority of persons interested, to be ascertained by the number of votes, allowing one vote for each share of one hundred dollars, and did authorize a building to be erected by said managers to be applied to the use of a theatre under the conditions aforesaid.¹⁶

¹⁵ There can be little doubt that the William Turner who signed the covenant was the manager.

¹⁶ Deed dated February 20, 1823, St. Louis Recorder of Deeds, Book I, p. 343.

Billon asserts that "they purchased a lot fifty feet front on the south side of Chestnut, by 120 feet deep, for \$1,500; upon this lot they erected foundation walls, when the funds gave out and the project fell through."¹⁷ A study of certain deeds in the office of the recorder of deeds reveals that the \$1,500 was not paid in cash but was represented by the ground which was exchanged by two of the Hempstead brothers for so many shares of stock. They, however, failed to convey the title to the land, and in 1823, the project having fallen through, the matter was again brought up, and the Hempsteads agreed to sell the lot and devote the proceeds to paying off debts against the theatre company.¹⁸

In spite of this set-back, the plans for the erection of a theatre were by no means abandoned, the promoters merely contenting themselves with a less ambitious scheme. Later in the same year a small frame theatre was built, according to Ludlow, by subscription, and was "started and intended for the use of an amateur society of young men of the town [the Thespians]." He describes it as follows:

It stood on what is now known as city block thirty (30), bounded by Olive, Locust, Main, and an alley. It fronted east, and stood about forty feet back from the west side of Main Street, extending to the middle of the block, being about sixty feet wide by one hundred and twenty long. It had a stage about thirty feet in depth; one tier of boxes, and a large pit that ran under the boxes, seating in all about six hundred persons. The scenery, although limited in variety, was well painted by Mr. John H. Dauberman, all done in water-colors, and without any gilding; still, though plain, it was very neat and tasteful.¹⁹

Billon's description does not conflict with this, but he says that it was "built by Isaac H. Griffith, in the rear of his lot; . . . the entrance by a narrow alley from Main St."²⁰

The completion of the new auditorium was announced in the *Gazette* of January 27, 1819.

¹⁷ Billon, *Annals of St. Louis in Its Territorial Days*, p. 77.

¹⁸ Deed dated February 1, 1823, St. Louis Recorder of Deeds, Book L, p. 343.

¹⁹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

²⁰ Billon, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

Theatre: The Ladies and Gentlemen of St. Louis are respectfully informed that the NEW THEATRE will be opened on *Monday evening, February 1st*, when will be presented Goldsmith's celebrated comedy of "She Stoops to Conquer." Between the play the famous song, THE WATERMAN. To which will be added the much admired farce, called the VILLAGE LAWYER. The box book will be opened on Thursday, January 28th, from 10 A.M. until 2 P.M. and continue open every day, excepting the days of performance, when they will positively close at 12 o'clock. Gentlemen taking whole boxes will please send servants to keep them. Smoking in the Theatre prohibited. Tickets may be had at the stores of Messrs. Collet and Kennerly. The doors will be opened at 6, and curtain will rise at seven. Price of admittance \$1—children under 12 years half price—nothing but current money will be received. Musicians who are inclined to play will call at the Theatre, where arrangements will be made with them for the season. 4 or 5 steady men who are willing to assist as supernumeraries—will be well paid for their services.

The moving-spirit behind this enterprise would appear to have been Vos. It will be remembered that he was associated with the Turner company as actor (he played Hotspur, for instance) and, according to Ludlow, as scene painter. When the rest of this troupe vanished into thin air, he remained in St. Louis, "following his business of house and sign painting."²¹ Later on his name appears in the Thespian advertisements, and a year later they gave a benefit for his family. Ludlow observes that he had "tolerably good taste, and some skill in scene-painting," and says of his acting that he was "not much practiced, but possessed a good share of natural talent."²² Rusk notes that he had been connected with a company in Lexington as early as 1810 and that he was said to have come from the Montreal theatre.²³ In the *Gazette* of March 31, 1819, we find him styling himself "manager of the St. Louis theatre"—this is an advertisement informing "gentlemen professing the histrionick art, and not otherwise engaged by an immediate epistolatory application, stating their lines of business" and so forth, that their applications

²¹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

²³ Rusk, *op. cit.*, I, 375.

“will meet with an immediate and I trust an efficient answer.” This notice was to be copied by several papers in Middle Western towns.

On February 3, 1819, the *Gazette* informed “the Ladies and Gentlemen of St. Louis” that “Dr. Young’s celebrated Tragedy, called *THE REVENGE* (with new dresses)” was in rehearsal. It was advertised for production on March 16 together with *The Jew and Doctor*, the dates indicating that the play was being rehearsed with unusual thoroughness. The actors styled themselves “The Thespian Society.” No further reference has been discovered to performances in 1819.

On May 5, however, the *Gazette* published a long and somewhat mystifying letter ostensibly from a shoemaker named Richard Heeltap, in which the writer complains that he is being ruined in business because his apprentices are stage-struck. He says:

I live in a small village a great many miles from St. Louis . . . : a thing has turned up which threatens to disappoint all my fond expectations of a comfortable sufficiency for the support of my declining years. Last fall a company of strolling actors visited our town, and played three or four nights at neighbor Larder’s tavern. Nearly all the people in the village attended the plays, and, for fear of being thought penurious, I gave my boys money to buy tickets. Since the players have gone off our young folks have been seized with an itch for acting, which I fear is incurable. They have formed a sort of a company, and hired a room at neighbor Larder’s, where they act their plays two or three times a week. One of my journeymen and two of my apprentices have joined this company; and I can truly say, that since they have become actors they are good for nothing else.

The whole letter seems to me to be intended as a joke. In the first place, I know of no town “a great many miles from St. Louis” likely at that time to have been visited by strolling players, the inhabitants of which would be apt to write to a St. Louis editor for advice. Moreover the style and the names of the persons referred to are wholly farcical. I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that the letter was intended

as a satire on conditions in St. Louis and to indicate that there was some sort of hostility being evinced among the staid and sober citizens to the growth of the drama in their midst. One sentence is particularly suggestive. Referring to the participation of "Miss Arabella Flash," he says, "We fear her example will be followed by other girls, although it is a general opinion among the old ladies that it is not becoming for women to go on the stage." Can this mean that some young St. Louis debutante, twenty-six years before Mrs. Mowatt, dared to defy the proprieties so outrageously as actually to appear on the stage as a play-actress? "It is," laments the correspondent, "the general complaint that since this theatre business came about, everything has gone wrong."

Whether or not they were frightened off by puritanical protests, we hear no more of any players, amateur or professional, during the second half of the year 1819. For all we can learn from the *Gazette*, the pleasure-loving citizens must needs have relied for their diversion upon an exhibition of "wax figures and large paintings" at the Illinois Hotel, the activities of the St. Louis Debating Society, and the ever present cotillions.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMING OF LUDLOW AND DRAKE, 1820

THE year 1819, as we have seen, closed with a theatrical famine; 1820 ushered in a feast. The town had been discovered by the "professors of the histrionick-art," and it soon had spread before it for its delectation a dramatic abundance, more, really, than its limited playgoing population could digest.

The first item was called to public notice by the *Enquirer* of January 5. It consisted of a program of recitations to be delivered at the St. Louis Theatre on Thursday evening, January 6, by an individual identified in an editorial in the same paper as "a stranger who has been by necessity reduced" to seeking funds in this manner. The bill was to be made up of a few selections from the English poets and excerpts from certain plays. Admission was to be fifty cents. No other reference to the entertainment has been discovered.

In our progress through the semi-weekly issues of the two rival newspapers, we now come upon something which stimulates our imaginations and carries our thoughts back to Mr. Richard Heeltap's despairing letter of the previous spring. The reader will recall that after that (doubtless) ironical communication there appeared no trace of any further theatricals, except Vos's call for "gentlemen professing the histrionick art." Can it be that there was furore sufficient to put a quietus upon the amateurs? Let us consider the following advertisement which appeared in both papers February 2. I use that in the *Enquirer*, since it is somewhat the fuller of the two:

THIS NIGHT ONLY, FOR THE BENEFIT OF MRS. VOS. THEATRE, THE ST. LOUIS THESPJAN SOCIETY, WILL PRESENT This Evening, Feb. 2, For the Benefit of Mrs. Vos, the much admired *petit* COMEDY,

called THE JEW AND DOCTOR, AFTER WHICH, *Song*, THE WATERMAN—RECITATION—*Song*, PADDY CAREV. To conclude with the laughable farce of THE TOOTH-ACHE, Or, *Les Meprises du Matin*. In thus tendering their services the Thespian Society are alone actuated by a feeling of humanity, which they trust will meet with a corresponding sentiment by the citizens of St. Louis and its vicinity. Box and pit tickets \$1 each, Gallery 50 cents, to be had at the Enquirer Printing office, and at the Theatre. Doors to be open at half past 6, and the performance to commence at half past 7 o'clock. Stoves are put up in different parts of the house to render it comfortable.—~~☞~~ Smoking prohibited in the Theatre. ~~☞~~ No POSTPONEMENT on account of the weather.

The notice in the *Gazette* is not quite so long, but it includes a phrase omitted from the other which throws light upon the fortunes of the "Manager of the St. Louis Theatre." It says, "In thus tendering their services *for the relief of a distressed family*" and so forth in the same words as in the other sheet. It is obvious from this that the Vos family had fallen upon evil days. Whatever may have been the reason, the theatrical business had not paid. But this to me is not the most interesting point. What provokes my curiosity is the question why the Thespians felt it necessary to apologize for resuming their activities. Again my mind reverts to the supposition that there had been potent opposition to their activities. Nor is this the last bit of possible evidence which we shall encounter. To the others I shall call attention farther on. The notice in the *Enquirer* states positively that there will be "no postponement on account of the weather." To the letter of this assurance, the players adhered, but nevertheless the weather proved too much for their audience if not for their own high spirits and charitable intentions. No doubt the cold was too great and the stoves were too feeble, for in the *Enquirer* of the ensuing Saturday, February 5, we find this:

By particular Request, POSITIVELY THE LAST NIGHT, FOR THE BENEFIT OF MRS. VOS. THEATRE. THE ST. LOUIS THESPIAN SOCIETY, Inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of St. Louis that owing to the unfavorable weather during the performance on Wednesday night last (*intended* for the benefit of Mrs. Vos) the amount of tickets

sold, was scarcely adequate to defray the incidental expenses of the night, and many persons desirous of attending were prevented, but have solicited a repetition of the pieces, This Evening, Feb. 5.

The rest of the advertisement is identical with the other.

Shortly after this attempt at the revival of the amateur society, there occurred an event which proved to be of the greatest consequence in the theatrical history of the community. This was the arrival with his company of comedians from Tennessee of Noah M. Ludlow, who was destined to be for more than thirty years a dominant figure in the theatre of St. Louis, who built in association with the celebrated Sol Smith the first real theatre west of the Mississippi, and who, retiring after a career of nearly forty years, wrote an account of his experiences which, however inaccurate it may be in detail, remains one of the classics in the literature of the American stage.

Ludlow was a native of New York who at the age of eighteen first began playing minor rôles in the stock company of John Bernard at Albany. Two years later, in 1815, he was one of the pioneering expedition led through the wilds of western Pennsylvania and Ohio, by Samuel Drake, Sr., on his way to entertain the legislators of Kentucky. It was to this company that Luke Usher rented the theatres which Turner claimed were already promised to him. After a few seasons with this veteran he organized a company of his own, playing in Nashville and other towns to the south. As an actor, although he essayed a variety of rôles, he was at his best in what was known as "genteel comedy," for which his birth and breeding helped to fit him. At the time of his arrival in St. Louis, he was twenty-four years old, determined, courageous, and talented.

In his *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, Ludlow gives a long and circumstantial account of his coming to St. Louis, the future center of his activities and the home of his later years. It is surprising, especially in view of the fact that he appears to be writing from notes, that this account should be, except

in its general outlines, in many respects seriously incorrect. The explanation must be found in his advanced age, about eighty, when he set to recording his recollections, and the sixty-odd years which had elapsed since the events chronicled in this chapter of his book. He explains that he chose St. Louis as the scene of his future endeavors because, someone having forestalled him in New Orleans, St. Louis, as described by a relative who had recently visited it, seemed to him "the next best point for me to attempt another pioneering expedition."¹ He goes on to say that, on the advice of his friend, he consulted Isaac N. Henry, who encouraged him greatly, assuring him that

the people seemed delighted with even the amateur acting; and he had no doubt I would do very well in St. Louis. The population, he said, was very limited—between three and four thousand—yet, from what he had witnessed of the eagerness of the people to behold the performances of the "Thespians," and the pleasure they seemed to find in such amusements, he concluded a company of "regulars" must do well. A few days after the receipt of this letter from Mr. Henry I got one from John H. Vos, whom the reader may, perhaps, remember I spoke of . . . as having met in Louisville. Mr. Vos having learned of Mr. Henry my inquiries relative to visiting St. Louis, wrote, urging me to come on by all means, as there was a good opening for me and my company. Mr. Vos had been located in St. Louis about a year, following his business of house and sign painting; but he had "smelt the footlights" of a theatre, and the contagion had taken possession of him. His ambition was to *act!* He told me the temporary theatre which the "Thespians" had been occupying for one or two performances could be had on very moderate terms—probably any sum I would offer; that he would undertake to negotiate the matter for me, and let me know the result. I authorized him to do so, and in about three weeks got an answer that all was arranged, without naming the conditions, and requesting me to come on immediately to St. Louis; adding, at the same time, that he and his wife would expect to play with us. He said the scenery and the building belonged to the same parties, and could be had for a mere nominal sum if successful, or nothing if otherwise.²

¹ Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, p. 180.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 180-81.

The prospects seeming so good, he decided, despite the protests of his Nashville acquaintances, who pointed out that over half the inhabitants were Canadian French and could not appreciate the English drama, to make the venture. He therefore at once engaged three young men named Finlay, Flanagan, and Frethy, and also a young girl by the name of Macaffrey to accompany him, and his wife. Miss Macaffrey had, according to *Dramatic Life*, joined the Ludlows at Nashville about eighteen months before; the author describes her as "a young lady . . . who had a desire to become a professional actress."³ Yet the cast of the first play presented in St. Louis by Ludlow included, according to the *Enquirer*, "Miss Caffrey," "*her first appearance on any stage*"!⁴ As for the three men, who had come under the Ludlow banner a little more than a year before, also in Nashville—Flanagan, says his manager, was a cabinet-maker, "and had never (in December, 1818) performed at all on the stage. Frethy was a 'stage-struck' tailor, from Pittsburgh, who had performed a few times in an amateur company of private theatricals. Finlay, also a tailor, had been a *sailor*, and lost one leg."⁵ After reading these descriptions, one is prone to wonder why these aspirants to histrionic fame were so much more "regular" than Turner's followers. To these novices were added four persons who were at least more experienced. They had been playing in Cincinnati and were summoned by letter to join the St. Louis expedition in Nashville. Ludlow was delighted at their acquisition, though his estimate of their artistic gifts could not be called enthusiastic.

Mr. Hanna was a young man, of tolerably good appearance, and, as I found afterwards, a very useful actor. Mrs. Hanna was about ten years older than her husband, and quite stout—a very good appearance for old women, which she played respectably. Miss Seymour was quite young—I suppose not over fifteen years of age—but well grown, and rather good-looking. Mr. Cargill was a man

³ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁴ *St. Louis Enquirer*, March 8, 1820.

⁵ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

of about forty years of age, and bore a great resemblance to Stuart's likeness of Gen. George Washington. He was a very useful man, played dignified fathers very well, and withal a very worthy, honorable man. Mr. Cargill and Mr. Hanna were both printers by trade, but had been acting for a year or two in some theatre East. About the same time a young man named Samuel Jones came from Louisville and joined me. He was also a printer, but having "smelt the footlights," had caught the infection, and became "stage-mad." He also had performed for a short time somewhere, previous to joining me.⁶

Having gathered together this aggregation of actors and would-be actors, Ludlow says that with them he set forth to conquer new worlds, about November 20, 1819.

And now it is that, attempting to follow his version of subsequent events and reconcile it with contemporary accounts, we begin to find ourselves in deep water. According to his calculations, he and his wife reached their destination about December 8. At Cape Girardeau they had taken a steamboat, leaving the rest of the company to continue in the keelboat.

Just two days after our arrival, a young man of the name of King came to St. Louis from Louisville to join me, on the strength of some letters we had exchanged previous to my departure from Nashville. Mr. King was a good-looking, gentlemanly young man, with some musical ability, but not much dramatic force. However, he dressed well, and sang all the fashionable songs of the day. I found in the city a very clever painter of the name of John H. Dauberman,⁷ who had painted the scenery of the theatre for the amateurs, and he had performed some characters in their few plays. He was engaged by me to paint, and to act when I should need him; he was a man of genius, and a first-rate, good fellow. The company now consisted of ten men and five women, viz: Ludlow, Vos, Hanna, Cargill, King, Jones, Flanagan, Finlay, Frethy, and Dauberman; Mrs. Ludlow [who had gone on the stage upon becoming engaged to the young actor-manager in 1817],⁸ Mrs. Vos, Mrs. Hanna, Miss Macaffrey, and Miss Seymour.⁹

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁷ Paxton's *Directory of 1821* has him "Douberman, John J., ornamental painter."

⁸ Ludlow, *op cit.*, pp. 107-8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

Before opening, Ludlow goes on, he "waited on" Governor Clark¹⁰ to inquire whether or not he would be required to pay a tax. But the famous man received him with every courtesy and replied, "Mr. Ludlow, we feel too much complimented by you and your company visiting us to think of committing such an uncourteous act as *taxing* you. It affords me great pleasure to say that there is no authority for any such procedure in Missouri." After describing the interview in detail, Ludlow adds that when the season opened he again "waited on the Governor and presented him with a *carte blanche* ticket for our theatre."¹¹ Unfortunately, however, during the month of December, 1819, Governor Clark was not in St. Louis, but hundreds of miles away. This is proved by a letter written by him in Richmond, Virginia, on the sixteenth, just at the time Ludlow says he was interviewing him.¹²

Ludlow states that he began his first season in St. Louis "about the middle of December, 1819, with the comedy of 'Honeymoon' " by Tobin, one of the most popular plays of the day. He himself, he records, played Duke Aranza, the leading male rôle, with his wife opposite him as Juliana. It was followed by the farce of *The Liar*, in which piece they also appeared. The double bill enlisted, according to his account, the services of the entire troupe except Miss Seymour and Finlay. He adds (in italics): "*This was the first dramatic performance by a professional company of comedians ever given in the city of St. Louis, Missouri.*" He was able, he says, to collect only four or five musicians and gave three performances a week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and "appeared to give general satisfaction."¹³

With the remainder of Ludlow's narrative I shall not go on for the present. Though probably correct in many respects, it is certainly erroneous in most of its details. As a matter of

¹⁰ William Clark, of the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition.

¹¹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-85.

¹² Mo. Hist. Soc., Voorhis Collection.

¹³ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-85.

fact, whenever he left Tennessee, he did not reach St. Louis until about March 1, 1820, and did not open until March 9. For information concerning this season, we must turn to the *St. Louis Enquirer*, the mouthpiece of the later celebrated Thomas Hart Benton, edited by Isaac N. Henry and Charles Keemle, the latter of whom was long one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the drama in the community. We have seen that Ludlow's own account is quite unreliable, and the *Gazette* completely ignored the undertaking which enjoyed the encouragement of its hated rival. But, fortunately for us, the *Enquirer* had plenty to say on the subject. On Saturday, February 26, 1820, this paper printed the following notice:

The Theatre in this place will open in the course of 8 or 10 days, under the superintendance of Messrs. Vos and Ludlow, who, with ten other performers from the Nashville theatres are on board the Missouri Packet, which lay at Ste. Genevieve on Thursday last and was to leave today.

This was followed on March 4 by a letter signed "A Friend of the Drama" which prepares the way for the coming invasion and seeks to calm any fears indulged in by the respectable elements of society. It assures the public that "Mr. L. stands fair as a general performer and excels in genteel comedy and during the time he resided in Nashville he was generally beliked and sustained the character of a gentleman." The writer adds warily, "I am not acquainted with the performers in the employ of Messrs. Vos & Ludlow, but have been informed that the young men are not addicted to habits of dissipation," and concludes his communication with the following warning:

We must not look for performers here, equal to those in the Atlantic cities; neither must we expect to find a Mrs. Turner. Mrs. T. had not her superior as an actress in the United States.—The winter's amusements being at an end, and the time of the year approaching

"When hearts and flowers are all in season,"

it may be reasonable to suppose, if the citizens are pleased with the performance, that the theatre will be well attended.¹⁴

These assurances being perhaps deemed not quite sufficient, the two managers inserted still another in the *Enquirer* of March 8.

The managers of the Dramatic Corps, recently arrived, take this method of informing the Ladies and Gentlemen of St. Louis and its vicinity, that they have been at considerable trouble and expense in combining and conveying to this place, their present company which, though not quite so numerous as they intend it shall be, yet they hope by a judicious selection of pieces and a diligent attention to business, to partake of a portion of that liberality and patronage which has in so eminent a degree distinguished the inhabitants of this town. It may not perhaps be superfluous to observe that, no piece will be allowed to appear that shall be in any way indelicate or improper, they hope to have it in their power to offer a source of amusement that shall be at the same time rational, moral and entertaining.

Then they proceed to announce Mrs. Centlivre's *The Busy Body* and O'Keeffe's musical farce *The Poor Soldier* for Thursday evening, March 9.

Pit and Boxes, \$1 each—Gallery, 75 cents. Children half price. As smoking is in general disagreeable to ladies, it is to be hoped that no gentleman will indulge in it, while in the Theatre.—No disorderly people admitted in the boxes. No money taken at the door.—TICKETS to be had at the Bar of the Theatre on play days from 10 o'clock A.M. until 2 P.M.; and from 5 until the end of the performance.—Tickets also to be had at the office of the *St. Louis Enquirer*. Performance to commence precisely at 6 o'clock. Parties wishing to secure a box to themselves, can do so by taking a certain number of tickets, and by applications at the Bar of the Theatre on play days, between 10 and 2. Days of performance (for this week) Thursday and Saturday.—No postponement on account of weather.

The casts of the two plays are announced as follows: *The Busy Body*: Sir George Airy, Hanna; Sir Francis Gripe, Ludlow; Charles, Vos; Marplot, Cargill; Sir Jealous Traffick,

¹⁴ *St. Louis Enquirer*, March 4, 1820.

Tull; Whisper, Young; Drawer, Roberts; Miranda, Mrs. Ludlow; Isabinda, Mrs. Vos; Patch, Miss Caffrey, *her first appearance on any stage*; *The Poor Soldier*: Patrick (the Poor Soldier), Cargill; Dermot, Frethy; Darby, Ludlow; Bagatelle, Hanna; Captain Fitzroy, Vos; Father Luke, Young; Boy, Roberts; Norah, Mrs. Vos; Kathleen, Mrs. Ludlow. After the character of Scentwell in the first play, a blank is left, no one being announced for the part. It will be observed that there are decided discrepancies between these items and Ludlow's version. The latter is incorrect in giving not only the date but also the plays which made up the opening bill. Furthermore the personnel of the company appears to be slightly different. Of Miss Seymour, Finlay, Flanagan, Jones, and Douberman, there is no mention either in this or in the subsequent casts published in the *Enquirer*; instead, we have Tull, Young, and Roberts, whoever they may have been. This does not mean of necessity that these individuals were not "among those present." They may have been. The post-office advertised in the *Gazette* of January 12 that it had letters for James Finley and also L. Finley, as well as for Sally Hanna, Samuel Jones, and Samuel P. Jones. But their names nowhere appear on the bills, and even the smallest rôles, played by Frethy and Roberts, are noticed. Another odd circumstance revealed by the same paper is that by February 1, "Samuel P. Jones & Co., Book-binders, Stationers, and Blank Book Manufacturers" were doing business next door to the *Gazette* office. Ludlow gives Samuel Jones's trade as printing and says he came to St. Louis in his company. Of course, there may have been two printers by the name of Samuel Jones in town at that time, but only by a decided coincidence. The name is never mentioned in reference to the stage, but only in the advertisement which is run into May. Nor does it appear in the 1821 directory, which was doubtless compiled during the preceding year.

The theatrical season having now got under way, it was also "open season" for the self-constituted dramatic critics

who began in the *Enquirer* of March 11 a running fire of comments which are not only amusing in themselves but also valuable for the light they throw on contemporary tastes and on the nature of performances given on the Western frontier at that time. The first of these, I shall quote in full.

FOR THE ST. LOUIS ENQUIRER. Of all amusements that man searches after, a well chosen Theatrical performance, is the most fascinating; it may really be called an intellectual repast. For there, all the senses are engaged. Hence is the cause of its wonderful effects on society; for man who by nature is a creature of imitation, readily partakes of the sentiments, manners and feelings that are there exhibited. It therefore be the duty of the managers of the Theatre to curtail every thing, of an unpleasant nature, and to represent only such scenes as tend to improve society.

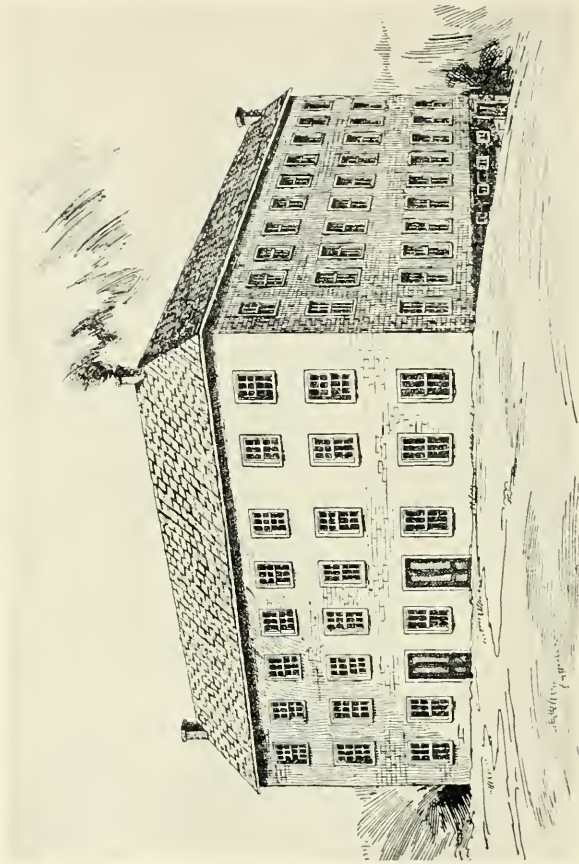
The "*Busy Body*" and "*Poor Soldier*" (pieces that were selected for the last night's performance) do honor to the managers—Although, at the same time, it is to be wished a few sentences had been erased. For it is well known there are persons standing with their mouths open, ready to cry down their establishment.

To say anything in regard to the talents of the different performers, it is impossible, for one night is not sufficient to judge of their merits; and even if it were, the policy would be bad, as it is their first appearance; but I must do them justice to say, that as far as I have been able to ascertain, they give general satisfaction.

Those persons who expressed as a reason for not attending the Theatre, the fear of disturbance among the audience, may now banish from their minds every thing of that kind, for the behaviour of every person present was such as it should have been—so that it is to be hoped the performers will receive an encouragement due to their exertions; and since there is nothing that can injure the delicacy of the female ear, we shall see the boxes filled with them, particularly as it will have a tendency to render decency, order and decorum more perfect; and the only obstacle that I know, is the misconceived idea of the gentlemen in not permitting them to refund their proportion of the expences of the box, for they should be aware that *ladies* cannot attend the theatre when they have to be under a greater obligation than their sex naturally places them.

A Friend of the Drama.

On the same page with this enthusiastic if not altogether grammatical disquisition appears the company's advertise-



BENNETT'S MANSION HOUSE HOTEL, 1819

(From a drawing in Billon's *Annals of St. Louis in Its Territorial Days*)

ment for the plays of the evening (March 11). *Turn Out*, or *A Peep at Politics*, with Ludlow, Hanna, Vos, Frethy, King, Tull, Young, Roberts, Mrs. Ludlow, Mrs. Vos, and Miss Caffrey; and the farce *Darkness Visible*, with the same persons plus Cargill and minus Miss Caffrey. The same plays and casts are advertised for performance on the following Wednesday (March 15), no reason being given for the repetition, if repetition it was. Probably the performance was called off because of inclement weather, despite the fact that the advertisements say positively that there will be no postponement for such cause. Ludlow asserts that it was quite cold. In this second notice the days of performance are given as Wednesday and Saturday.

The season had scarcely got under way when events took a surprising turn, one which to poor Ludlow must have been the cause of dismay. On the same page of the *Enquirer* of March 11, which carried his program, was displayed a "card" signed by the passengers of the steamboat "Rapide" from Louisville thanking Captain Sturges "for his indefatigable exertions in contributing to their ease and comfort." The ominous thing about it was the names of some of the signers, Mr. Drake and family, Palmer Fisher and family, H. Lewis, S. Drake, Jr., I. O. Lewis, Victor F. Mongin and family, and James S. Drake.¹⁵ The unfortunate young producer must have realized that this invasion spelled nothing short of disaster for him, there being no reason to pin any hope on the rule "First come, first served." These grateful voyagers were none other than his own former manager "Old Sam" Drake with his gifted family and several satellites, a company about whose "regularity" there could be no possible question. Nor should we expect the veteran trouper to be particularly pleased to find himself anticipated and the best—or, rather, the least bad—theatre in town already occupied. Lewis F. Thomas in *The Valley of the Mississippi* quotes Colonel

¹⁵ Two names are misspelled. "I." O. Lewis should be "J." O., and "Mongin" should be "Mongen."

Charles Keemle to the effect that Drake was not aware of Ludlow's presence in the town and that he had been "earnestly solicited to come here by some of our most influential and wealthy citizens."¹⁶ But Keemle's theatrical reminiscences are full of errors (I suspect that he was one of Ludlow's informants) and it scarcely seems likely that he is right in this instance. In the first place, why did Henry and Vos know nothing of Drake's projected visit, and why were the "wealthy and influential citizens" ignorant of Ludlow's imminent arrival? Furthermore, why did they neglect to engage the theatre? Moreover, I can hardly find it credible that Drake was not moving with both eyes open. It is difficult to believe that, coming from Louisville, he knew nothing of the campaign of his former comedian; it is possible that he did not, but in my opinion hardly probable. We know, too, that he was not deterred from entering a certain field merely because someone else happened to have got there first. He had succeeded in driving poor Turner out of the Kentucky towns, and would have at least attempted to dislodge him from Cincinnati had he not been offended by the refusal of the citizens to let him perform tax-free.¹⁷ So he probably entertained no fears of Ludlow, whose *corps dramatique* in no way compared in talent with his, or, for that matter, probably with Turner's Cincinnati company. At all events, he was here, and the meager theatregoing public of little St. Louis suddenly found itself confronted with *embarras de richesse*.

Ludlow, however, was no coward, and he kept bravely on. He opened his advertisement in the *Enquirer* of March 18 with the following not inappropriate quotation:

"Tis not in mortals to command success,
But we'll do more" our efforts shall "deserve it."

He then announced *The Castle Spectre* or *The Secrets of Conway Castle* (by M. G. Lewis) with Vos as Osmond, himself as

¹⁶ Thomas and Wild, *The Valley of the Mississippi*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁷ Rusk, *The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier*, I, 373.

Percy, Cargill as Father Philip, Mrs. Ludlow as Angela, and Miss Caffrey as the Ghost of Evelina, and other members of the troupe in the various other rôles; "after which the celebrated musical FARCE" by O'Keeffe, *The Rival Soldiers*, usually known by its other title *Sprigs of Laurel*, with himself as Nipperkin, Mrs. Ludlow as May Tactic, and Tull, Hanna, King, Cargill, Young, Frethy, and Roberts also in the cast. "Performance to begin *precisely* at 7 o'clock." The same paper displays a plea from the pen of a writer who signed himself "Thespis."

He says:

The admirers of the Drama will have an opportunity THIS EVENING of witnessing the powers of the company from Tennessee, in Tragedy. . . . The pieces are too well known to need praise or recommendation. The part of Osmond . . . requires the energy and talents of a *Cooper* to do it that justice it demands. The characters of Percy, Hassan, and Kenrick, also call for a share of theatrical knowledge and judgment, which, we doubt will be displayed.—It is hoped the public will view the young company with an impartial eye, for on the success of their efforts this evening depends in a great measure, their future hopes of admiration and support from the citizens of St. Louis.

Ludlow's own account of the events of the evening is worth repeating here. He says that his wife assumed the tragic part of Angela

very reluctantly, feeling it was beyond her powers, and this feeling had depressed her all the time she was performing the character; in fact, she had been miserable in regard to it for three days, so much so that she could not sleep.

She succeeded in the performance very well until the "ghost scene," where the ghost of *Evelina*, her mother, appears to her, to whom she kneels, and is enveloped in that position by the white drapery flowing from the head of the spectre, and as the latter was retreating from her she fainted and fell upon her face. It had a fine and thrilling effect upon the audience; but when the curtain descended that shut out the audience, and I ran to raise her up, I found that she had fainted in *reality*. We made use of the proper means to bring about consciousness, but I found her so unnerved

and prostrated that she could not finish the part, and I was compelled to go before the audience and state our dilemma. They received the announcement with great kindness, and a friend of mine rose from his seat in the pit, and asked that Mrs. Ludlow be permitted to retire to her own residence for the night, and that it be only required of us to perform the farce, in which she had nothing to do. This movement was seconded by loud applause. I then withdrew, ordered a carriage, and Mrs. Ludlow with Miss Macaffrey went home. The cause of this fainting, I became satisfied, was the result of the overanxiety, superinducing a weakness, disturbing the nerves, and extending its influence to the brain; this and the extreme cold, together with feelings induced by the scene she had been enacting, altogether brought on this condition of syncope. Mrs. Ludlow was attacked that night with a fever, and did not recover her usual health for more than a week.¹⁸

The only part of this account which conflicts with the newspaper reference is the statement that his wife was to have no part in the farce. We have seen that she was scheduled to appear in it as well as in the melodrama. Who, we may speculate, took her place? Ludlow goes on to say that he gave but two more performances, and then surrendered to the inevitable. There are here some slight mistakes in his statistics, but they are not important.

Our performances were very well attended for the first three weeks, and until the weather became so cold that the ladies were unwilling to venture out; and men stayed away from the theatre because there were but few ladies attending the performances. We did our best to warm the building, but the only means attainable were some old-fashioned stoves, and those of not much capacity; and although kept red-hot nearly all the time, had but little effect on distant parts of the building.¹⁹

Of course these events actually occurred in March, and not, as the *Dramatic Life* has it, about February 1, and it was, when *The Castle Spectre* proved too much for Mrs. Ludlow, only nine days since the opening performance. I can find in the *Enquirer* reference to but one more—*The Midnight Hour* and *Fortune's Frolick*—advertised March 22 for the ensuing

¹⁸ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-88.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

evening, but that does not necessarily mean that the other alluded to by Ludlow was not presented. At all events, as he says, he was compelled to give up, "for the place could not afford support for two companies; one, therefore, must be crowded to the wall, and it did not take long to determine which it should be."

The reasons for the survival of the Drake aggregation—short-lived though it may have been—are not difficult to see. Shut out of the theatre, the Company from Kentucky rented the ballroom of Bennett's City Hotel, which stood on the corner of Third and Vine streets, at the extreme northwest corner of the town, a room about thirty by sixty feet in dimension. "In this room Mr. Drake had some seats erected on the inclined plane plan, with a small stage on the same floor, divided from the audience only by the scenery." "Mr. Drake," he goes on, "had the advantage of us in two ways: his room could be made comfortable during the cold weather, and his company was better than ours: he had performers of more experience in the profession."²⁰ Upon this latter point the writer of the memoirs is perfectly frank. On another page of his reminiscences he says that those members of his disbanded corps who were not engaged by Drake, "as all of them had trades that were ever in demand, . . . found no difficulty in procuring employment that paid them better than their inefficient theatrical acquirements could have done."²¹ As a matter of fact, it would probably have taken far better actors than these recruits to rival the newcomers. The Drakes were a peculiarly gifted family. They had come to this country from England in 1810, when, according to Clapp's *Record of the Boston Stage*, "Old Sam" made his American début at the Federal Street Theatre, in the Massachusetts city.²² Wemyss adds that he was "the most popular comedian, as well as Pioneer of the Regular Drama in Louis-

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

²² Clapp, p. 117. Ludlow gives the date of his birth as 1768 (*op. cit.*, p. 363).

ville, and other cities of the West."²³ He had, as we have seen already, led the historic expedition from John Bernard's theatre in Albany, where he had been playing, to Kentucky in 1815, Ludlow, who had only very recently adopted the stage as a profession, being one of the recruits. By this time his family had become quite an institution in "the West." Of the two sons who accompanied him to St. Louis, the younger, "Aleck," was destined to acquire great popularity in the West as a low comedian and even to invade New York. Julia too became well known throughout the country as a leading lady of charm and ability. It is sad to record that both of these gifted young people, and young Sam as well, were soon to pass from the earthly stage before they had a chance to reap the rewards their talents promised. Within twelve years, all three were in their graves. But, happily, Julia left behind her a legacy to the American theatre, in a daughter who, as Julia Dean, was to become one of the most dearly loved young actresses on the stage of her day, though Ludlow, whose account of the family is colored with a pleasantly reminiscent affection, maintains that the child, for all her loveliness and artistry, was not the equal of her mother.²⁴

The Missouri Historical Society has on display in its museum in St. Louis a playbill advertising what was apparently Drake's first performance. After respectfully informing the public "that the Company under the management of Mr. Drake, will perform for a few nights in a temporary Theatre erected in Mr. Bennet's Ball Room," the bill announces for Wednesday evening, March 22, Coleman's *The Jealous Wife* and "the admired afterpiece called 'The Adopted Child, or Secrets of Conway Castle.'" In the former, Fisher was to play Mr. Oakley; O. Lewis, Bassett; "Alexander", Sir Harry Bugle; Douglas, Captain O'Cutter; Mr. Smith, Tom; H. Lewis, Lord Trinket; Mrs. Fisher, Lady Freelove; Mrs. Mongen, Harriet; and Miss McBride, Toilette. In the afterpiece

²³ Wemyss, *Chronology of the American Stage*, p. 49.

²⁴ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

Theatre.

By the Company from Kentucky.

THE Public are respectfully informed that the Company under the management of Mr. Drake, will perform for a few nights in a temporary Theatre, erected in Mr. Bennet's Ball Room.

On Wednesday evening March 22,

Will be presented, the celebrated and genuine Comedy as written by G. Colman the Elder, in 5 acts, called

THE JEALOUS WIFE.

Mr. Oakly
Myer Oakly
Charles Oakly
Russell
Sir Harry Dugby
Captain O'Cooper

Mr. Fisher,
Drake,
S. Drake,
H. Lewis,
Alexander,
Douglas,

Tom
Lord Trimet
Mrs. Oakly
Emily Freeland
Harriet
Toulette

Mr. Smith,
H. Lewis,
Miss John Drake,
Mrs. Fisher,
Miner,
Miss M. Beale.

END OF THE PLAY.

A Comic Song—"The Bag of Nails," *By Mr. Alexander.*
"Jessy, the Flower of Dunblane," *— — Mr. O. Lewis.*

TO WHICH WILL BE ADDED, THE ADMIRABLE AFTERPIECE, CALLED

The Adopted Child, OR, SECRETS OF MILFORD CASTLE.

Sir Bertrand
Lt. Nage
Spruce
Berard
Adopted Boy
Pilot

Mr. O. Lewis,
S. Drake,
H. Lewis,
Drake,
Miss Ann Fisher,
Mr. Douglas,

Michael the Fisherman } With the song of }
"Hill Hatch," } Mr. Fisher,
Lucy }
Nell } Mrs. M'Aggs,
Clara } Fisher,
Miss Anna Drake.

Doors to be opened at 6 and the performance to begin at a quarter before 7 o'clock.—Price of admission One Dollar.

Tickets to be had at the Bar of Mr. Bennet's Tavern, and at the Esquire printing office.—No money to be taken at the doors.

The number of tickets for sale will be limited to the magnitude of the building.—Smoking Segars prohibited.

March 21, 1820.

Printed at the Office of the St. Louis Enquirer.

both Lewises, S. Drake, Sr., S. Drake, Jr., Ann Fisher, Douglas, Fisher, Mrs. Mongen, and Julia Drake were to be seen. To this performance I have found no reference in the papers.

The first bill advertised in the press by the Company from Kentucky, as Drake's was called, was composed of Cumberland's *The Jew* and the farce of *The Bee Hive*, with, between the two, a song, "Scots Wha Hae wi' Wallace Bled" sung in costume by "S. Drake." This notice was printed in the *Enquirer* of March 25, and the plays were to be given that evening. The same paper gave space to a "communication" bearing upon the situation.

Theatre.—A compromise has taken place between the two companies of comedians, recently arrived in this place. The result has been, that part of the company from Tennessee has joined that from Kentucky; the whole to be under the management of *Mr. Drake*. The talents of the two companies being thus combined, the expectations of the citizens cannot be raised too high.—The females attached to the corps are all young and respectable performers, and it is a query whether there is a stage in the United States that can boast of a constellation of female beauty superior to that of St. Louis.

According to Ludlow, Drake offered to engage him and his wife, Vos, Cargill, Hanna, Mrs. Hanna, and Miss Seymour. "He said he feared to engage any more, for he feared the town would not support a very large company."²⁵ Vos, he says, refused to join unless his wife too was given a place, but Drake was adamant. Continuing his account, Ludlow says:

I think it was about February 1, 1820, that I reappeared in Mr. Drake's Company, opening in the character of *Young Marlow*, in Goldsmith's Comedy of "She Stoops To Conquer," which was cast as follows: *Sir Charles Marlow*, Mr. Cargill; *Young Marlow*, Ludlow; *Old Hardcastle*, S. Drake, Sr.; *Hastings*, J. O. Lewis; *Tony Lumpkin*, Aleck Drake; *Miss Hardcastle*, Miss Denny; *Mrs. Hardcastle*, Mrs. Lewis; *Miss Neville*, Mrs. Mongin; concluding the evening with the farce of "A Day after the Wedding"; *Colonel Freeloze*, Mr. Ludlow; *Lady Elizabeth*, Miss Julia Drake; other characters not remembered. The second night was played Sheri-

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

dan's comedy of the "Rivals." The pieces were well played, and gave general satisfaction.²⁶

It will be observed that again Ludlow's recollection was slightly inaccurate. Of the two bills in which he says he appeared I can find no trace. Again, that is not positive proof that they were not produced, but this seems, under the circumstances, rather improbable. Moreover, a production of *The Rivals* in 1823 was advertised as the first in the city.²⁷ The *Enquirer* was published twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturday, and it contains references, either in paid advertisements or in "communications," to performances: on every Monday up to and including May 15, except April 27 and May 8; every Wednesday; two Fridays (April 21 and May 5); and every Saturday except April 29.²⁸ The personnel of the Kentucky company does not appear to have quite coincided with Ludlow's list. He says:

Mr. Drake's company, as it stood then, was not, in point of numbers, equal to mine, he having only eight male performers, including himself, viz., S. Drake, Sr., S. Drake, Jr., Alex. Drake, Palmer Fisher, Henry Lewis, James O. Lewis, James Douglas, and I believe, one young man who delivered messages and attended to business behind the scenes, technically called a "property-man"; Miss Denny, Miss Julia Drake, Mrs. Fisher, Mrs. Lewis, and Mrs. Mongin, five female performers.²⁹

Of the presence of Miss Denny there is no evidence outside his book, and he does not mention Miss McBride or Mr. Smith, unless the latter was the property man. Had Miss Denny been present, her name would scarcely have been omitted from all the reviews and advertisements now extant. Furthermore, unless Franklin Graham was seriously in error, she had been playing in Montreal at least as late as January

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

²⁷ *Mo. Rep.*, February 5, 1823.

²⁸ About those of April 8 and May 6, there is a slight doubt. They may possibly have been given on other days, but that does not seem likely.

²⁹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

24, when she opened a short season there.³⁰ This assertion is in a way corroborated by her obituary in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* half a century later, which asserts that she made her first starring engagement in Canada in 1820.³¹

The same issue of the *Enquirer* which carries the notice of the amalgamation of the Tennessee and Kentucky companies, advertises, under a notice of an "illumination" in honor of Missouri's admission to the Union, *Wives as They Were and Maids as They Are*, a recitation "An Address to the Ladies—Miss McBride, a song "The Light House"—Mr. O. Lewis," and *The Review or The Wags of Windsor*. Later productions, according to the advertisements, were: *The School for Scandal* and *The Farmer*, April 1; *Speed the Plow* and *The Rival Soldiers*, April 5; *The Poor Gentleman* and a "grand melo drama *The Miller and His Men*," April 7 or 8; *The Iron Chest* and *Three and the Deuce*, April 12; *A Cure for the Heart-Ache* and *The Turnpike Gate*, April 15; *The Foundling of the Forest* and *Matrimony*, April 19; *Othello* and *'Tis All a Farce*, April 22; *The Wheel of Fortune* and *Three and the Deuce*, April 26; *King Lear* and *The Poor Soldier*, April 29; *The Road to Ruin* and *The Miller and His Men*, May 3; *The Miser*, *Sylvester Daggerwood*, and *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*, May 6; *The Curfew* and *High Life below Stairs*, May 10; *Love à la Mode*, *Dr. Lasts's Examination before the College of Physicians*, and *Lock and Key*, May 13; *Douglas* and *Honest Thieves*, May 15. These were not, however, all the plays presented. There are five advertisements which simply give advance notice of certain benefits without specifying the names of the plays to be given.³² There are also in the effusions of the would-be critics references to two

³⁰ Graham, *Histrionic Montreal*, p. 38.

³¹ *Louisville Courier-Journal*, September 4, 1875.

³² Benefits were performances the profits of which went in whole or in part to certain actors, whether visiting stars or important members of a company. A few popular stars received a third of the gross receipts instead of the profits, and Edwin Forrest was sometimes able to force out of indignant managers one-half of the entire proceeds of his benefits.

plays staged on other evenings, the farce of *The Purse* (no mention made of its companion-piece) and *The Jew and the Doctor* (again, the only one alluded to). The total is twenty-four bills of plays in seven and a half weeks; information is wanting for a calculation of the number of individual plays. After its long famine, St. Louis was faring rather well, too well in fact, as the event unhappily proved.

Let me quote from a few of the "theatrical communications" for the light they throw upon the proceedings in Mr. Bennett's Ball-Room and, later, in the Theatre, whither with the coming of warm weather the actors appear to have repaired. All the quotations are taken from the *Enquirer*, the first from the issue of April 5.

We have been much amused for two or three weeks past with the Theatrical exhibitions of Mr. Drake's company of comedians [*sic*] from Kentucky.³³ . . .

We are much pleased with Mr. *Fisher* in genteel comedy, but should be much more so, if he would appear as genteel on the stage as he does off. This he might do, by preserving his natural attitude in standing and walking, and leave off the ungraceful stoop which is peculiar to lord Wellington; now adopted (we are informed) on the British stage, and known by the name of the "*Wellington stoop*." However well such gross and miserable affectation may go down in England, we can assure Mr. Fisher that it is not adapted to the *American* stage, and if he wishes to be a favorite in St. Louis, he must not trespass too far on the good nature of the audience; in short, unless Mr. F. can appear on the stage, erect as nature has formed (unless he is representing one that is by nature deformed) we are not anxious to see him perform at all. . . .

[signed] DRAMATICUS & CO.

The next writer to take advantage of the occasion, one who was content to sign himself "A Citizen of St. Louis," was less critical. He expresses, in the *Enquirer* of April 8, little but approbation of

Mr. Drake's dramatic *corps* [whose] style of acting is admitted to be good by those who have seen the best theatres in Europe and

³³ This might seem to indicate that *The Jealous Wife* was not the first play, since that performance had taken place exactly two weeks before. Ludlow states that they played on alternate nights, and he may be right.

America; and the private character and personal deportment is [*sic*] such as to command for them individually, a large share of public esteem and respect. [He goes on] to suggest the citizens of St. Louis the propriety of taking measures to secure a larger portion of their performance, and at a season more propitious to the enjoyment of the drama, by completing the building begun for a theatre in this place, and putting it into the hands of Mr. Drake on terms which will give us the presence of his company in the months of December, January, and February.

It is then, the Citizen concludes, "that St. Louis needs a place to house rational amusement." That his proposal did not fall on deaf ears is evidenced by two notices published in the same paper on April 22 and 29, respectively. The first, under the head of "New Theatre" states that "A meeting of the Stockholders of the Theatre, is requested on Tuesday evening next at Bennet's Hotel, for the purpose of electing new Directors and receiving subscriptions for completing the building. [Signed] C. M. Price, Thos. Hempstead, Mang'rs." The second gives this information:

At an adjourned meeting of a large majority of the stockholders to the New Theatre, at the office of John R. Gay, esq. on the evening of the 27th inst. the following gentlemen were appointed Managers for the purpose of receiving subscriptions and superintending the building—viz: G. H. Kennerly, C. H. Price, Thos. Hempstead, Peter Ferguson. All those wishing to take stock will call on G. H. Kennerly.

All this looked promising, but, as we have already seen, the scheme fell through and the building never rose above its foundations.

But "Dramaticus & Co." was not through. We find him once more expressing himself through the same medium on April 12. He begins by saying that he has been accused of being "too candid in naming Mr. Fishers defects as a performer." He replies to those who maintain that he has no defects by quoting at length from Hamlet's advice to the players. Apparently feeling that some apology may not be out of place, he admits that his remarks "were made without much reflection, and were probably, rather 'highly sea-

soned.' ” But where the offender is concerned he will not back down. From him we learn something of the texts of the plays produced.

We admit that Mr. A. D. is an excellent performer, and that his prowess in most comical parts are astonishing, yet, we are averse to an actor's omitting language (when there is nothing indecorous in it) that the author has set down for him, and introducing other in its stead. We had striking instance of this on Wednesday night last, in the farce of “The Rival Soldiers.”—it appeared that Mr. A. D. in the character of *Nipperkin* was trying the patience of the audience, particularly in the drunken scene;—and on Monday night last the beauty of the “Jew & Doctor” was almost entirely destroyed, owing to two or three of the performers gagging, and *omitting* not only words, but one of the principal scenes in the piece, which could have been as easily represented as let alone; leaving the audience to guess at the fate of *Charles* and *Emily*.

After some more selections from Hamlet's advice, “Dramaticus & Co.” brings his critique to a close with this comment:

It would be ungenerous to say anything of the tragedies performed by the company, not having a stage adapted to that kind of performance; however, taking that and other disadvantages they labor under into consideration they exceed our expectations.

In a long letter, published in the *Enquirer* of April 15, “Melpomene” takes up a number of the players one by one and makes illuminating comments upon their work. For Aleck Drake and J. Lewis, the critic has little to say that is not commendatory. For the former he predicts, “when his judgment is more matured by a few years,” a position “at the very head of his line”; the latter, however, has his attention called to Hamlet's pertinent observations. His comments on H. Lewis suggest other things than acting.

[He] has talents for a certain line; and some of his performances have been inimitably good; we have not seen him for a few nights, and must say, have missed him. We have understood the cause; but surely all mankind have their foibles, “and men, are (in many respects) but children of a larger growth.”



JULIA DRAKE (MRS. EDWIN DEAN)

(From a painting in the possession of Mrs James P. Langhorne.)

For Ludlow, S. Drake, Jr., and Mrs. Fisher, he has only praise. Miss McBride is still a child; she deserves commendation for her recitations, but, if she intends to stay in the profession, she should begin to study "without delay." This communication concludes with some unfavorable criticism of the manager's casting of his productions and with the suggestion that certain unnamed members of his corps would do well to "retire to the equally honorable but less conspicuous walks of private life." Melpomene had so much to say that he—or should I say *she*?—had to be continued in the next issue.

Miss J. Drake's "single blessedness" makes us more delicate in our remarks. She must not think our intention is to flatter, or to amuse the credulity of her sex, when we say, she is all we can wish for; we have witnessed her in a variety of characters, and have been as often charmed with her exhibition of them. Youth, beauty, and a correct judgment when combined with a desire to please, can never fail.³⁴

Further reference to errors in Drake's composition of his casts is to be seen in a communication to the *Enquirer* of April 19. Apropos of Cargill's coming benefit, the writer expresses regret that this actor has "under the present management" had very few opportunities to display his real ability, and also that someone less capable has been cast as Marplot in *The Busy Body*, a rôle which, it will be recalled, he had filled on Ludlow's opening night. He adds that he is informed that for his benefit Cargill "has been at the additional expense of renting the Theatre, for the comfort of the audience (it being cooler than the Ball Room)."

On April 22 we find in the same column briefer appeals for the support of the benefits of J. O. Lewis, a "promising young performer" and of Mrs. Fisher "and her two little daughters."

. . . Was it for Mrs. Fisher's benefit alone, we should feel every disposition to see merit rewarded by giving her an overflowing house; but when we see the names of her two little daughters

³⁴ *St. Louis Enquirer*, April 19, 1820.

blended with her own . . . , and recollect how admirably they perform the little parts that have occasionally been allotted to them, we feel assured the citizens cannot be too liberal in their patronage. We have seen Miss Ann Fisher (the eldest, and she not more than 6 or 7 years old) perform in some scenes with a precision and judgment, that would have done honor to one of matured years.

Whatever may have been the reason, whether undue heat or popular dissatisfaction with Drake's casting, business seems to have fallen off after a few weeks, and on April 17 the members of the troupe began to take their benefits. Ludlow hints that the cause was his withdrawal with Mrs. Ludlow two or three weeks after they had joined the company. When she was cast for a rôle "not consonant with the nature of her engagement," and was forfeited a week's salary for declining to play it, they retired.

It may have been a stroke of policy in Mr. Drake, after having stopped our proceedings as a company; he may have taken this method, anticipating the results, to reduce his expenses. Be that as it may, he did himself no service by it; for his business soon began to fall off from some cause.³⁵

He is more probably correct when he points out that a more unfavorable time than the year 1819-20 for the commencement of any new business venture in St. Louis has not occurred from the day of its first foundation . . . up to the present time. St. Louis had in 1819, I believe, two banks, which had been in operation about two years. The object of these banks had been to loan money; and as every body was solvent when they *commenced* business, every body could borrow money of them, whether they were actually in need of it or not. The result was that in a couple of years, when payment had been required of what had been borrowed, there was a "tightness in the money market."³⁶

This financial panic probably is what lay behind the abandonment of the projected theatre on Chestnut Street.

As I said, the benefits began, so far as we can tell, with Julia Drake's on April 17. Here again we find confusion,

³⁵ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-92.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

because Ludlow's narrative conflicts with the newspaper accounts. Just exactly what did happen is not easy to determine. It will be remembered that Ludlow maintains that Vos refused to join the Kentucky Company because Drake would not engage his wife, and, later, that both Ludlows withdrew because Mrs. Ludlow was assigned to a rôle which she considered beneath her dignity. Yet we find in the *Enquirer* of May 10 a notice of "Mr. Vos' Benefit" for that evening, and three days later for May 15 "Mrs. Ludlow's Night." It is true that the author of *Dramatic Life* says that he and Vos continued to give performances after the exit of the main aggregation. But the Vos advertisement says specifically "By the Company from Kentucky" and Mrs. Ludlow's *Douglas* had Mrs. Mongen cast for Young Norval, and Mrs. Mongen was one of Drake's regulars. Ludlow asserts that James O. Lewis, like himself, "had some difficulty with Mr. Drake, and withdrew from his company at the close of the season."³⁷ But of any similar action on the part of Mrs. Mongen he makes no mention. Nor does he include her among those who had benefits. The conclusion is, therefore, inescapable that the historian's memory was again misleading him. We can, however, be fairly certain that after the last benefit, probably Mrs. Ludlow's, the Kentucky Comedians departed from the banks of the Mississippi, never to return again as a unit; many of the individuals too were seen here no more. James Douglas, or "Jimmie" as he was called, although no longer young, he who apparently had brought Mrs. Turner to Kentucky nine years before, was shortly afterward drowned while bathing in the Wabash River near Vincennes.³⁸ Despite the weaknesses revealed in the amateur critiques, and also the perversity of the manager in the matter of casting, we need have little doubt that their performances were well worth seeing. With "Old Sam" himself, the lovely Julia, Aleck (in spite of his youthful exuberance), and Palmer

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Fisher (in spite of the "Wellington stoop") on the stage, to say nothing of the capable Cargill, behind the candle foot-lights, the productions cannot have been total losses artistically. Of the financial failure, I think we have ample explanation in the "hard times" and the limited population. To furnish audiences of any size at all, the same persons must needs have gone to nearly every performance, and this, with the "tightness of money," few could afford to do.

That there was also a certain element in town which was hostile to the undertaking, we have excellent evidence. I have already quoted articles from the papers which point in that direction. There is another which leaves no possible room for doubt. On March 29, the *Enquirer* published the following indignant editorial:

Shameful outrage.—Some malicious hearted wretch stole into the Theatre on Monday night last, and destroyed part of the scenery by hacking it to pieces with a knife or something of the kind. It is hoped that the perpetrator of this act will be discovered, so that he may meet with the punishment that his crime justly merits.

The question rises in one's mind whether all this hostility sprang from the outraged morals of some of the townspeople, or had a more personal or possibly political origin. It will be noticed that the attack deplored above was made on the scenery at the Theatre and not at the hotel. Hence it was obviously aimed at Ludlow's company, and not at Drake's, who so far as we can tell did not move from the ball room to the theatre until Cargill's night, April 19. Of any attempts to interfere with the operations of the latter group I have found no trace. There is, too, something provocative of speculation in a certain mysterious feature mentioned above, the ominous silence of the *Gazette* on the subject of this particular season. It will be remembered that Ludlow in his autobiography states that his coming to St. Louis was first proposed by Isaac N. Henry, who was editing a newspaper here. This newspaper, the *Enquirer*, was the mouthpiece of

no less a person than the future senator, Thomas Hart Benton. At this time, in fact, as usual, Benton was involved in a bitter feud, both personal and political, and was perhaps the best hated man in the community. Three years before, a quarrel of long standing had culminated in his two duels with Charles Lucas, son of Judge J. B. C. Lucas and one of the rising young lawyers of the town, in the second of which the young man had fallen mortally wounded. The responsibility for this tragedy has never been definitely settled, but feeling ran high and Benton even feared for his life. In 1820, when the first senatorial elections were held, it took on a political character, Benton being elected over Judge Lucas by some rather questionable methods. The Lucas family had no more violent partisan than Joseph Charless, editor of the *Gazette*, and the exchange of amenities between him and both Benton and Henry was more vivid than delicate. These being the circumstances, it is easy to surmise why the older paper ignored an undertaking which was backed by the editor of its iniquitous contemporary. It is not so easy to explain why it did not ally itself with the Company from Kentucky, but there was obviously little rivalry between the two troupes, and the time was very short before they united. Probably, after all, the antagonism can with reasonable assurance be charged to the Puritanism which had apparently opposed the efforts of the Thespians. New England had no monopoly upon fanaticism of this breed.

But whatever the cause, the atmosphere must have been charged with electricity, and the possibility for speculation makes the events no less interesting. At all events, St. Louis was now fairly launched upon its theatrical career, the ups and downs of which it will now be my task to follow.

CHAPTER V

FEASTS AND FAMINES, 1820-26

THE exodus of the Kentucky Comedians did not, as might be expected, result in an immediate theatrical famine. Ludlow and Vos, with their wives, as well as James Lewis, had been left behind, and in something of a predicament. Ludlow's situation was particularly embarrassing.

[I had] . . . a wife and child to care for, a small amount of money in my pockets, and a very blue prospect before me. The people of the town appeared to have *quantum suf* of theatricals, judging from the diminishing receipts of the closing weeks of the Drake season; nevertheless Mr. Vos, having done nothing himself,¹ was anxious we should try it once more together. The young men lately with us were still in the town, and ready to try their fortunes again on the public stage. . . . After turning the matter over in my mind, I concluded to try a few nights, in which we were to put up some names for benefits. Our organization for this temporary season was a sharing scheme, based on nominal salaries, and paid *pro rata*, after deducting all expenses of the theatre. As regarded the benefits, it was agreed that a fixed sum should be set down as the charges for the night, to be paid if that amount came into the theatre, the beneficiary to have all over that sum, and not to be held responsible for any deficiency; should the receipts fall short of the charges, the night in such a case becoming a stock night. It was agreed that I should put up my name first, then Mr. Vos, then Mrs. Ludlow, then Mr. Lewis, then Mr. Dauberman, who had many acquaintances and friends in the town. By my benefit I cleared about \$100; Mr. Vos, about \$70; Mrs. Ludlow, about \$80; Mr. Lewis, \$50; but Mr. Dauberman about \$150. Mr. Dauberman made great exertions among his friends, and went to some additional expense in new scenery. The other members declined putting their names up. We tried the town two or three nights with a "blood and thunder" play, called "Abaellino, or the Great Bandit," in which I had to enact the blood-thirsty robber and the elegant

¹ This scarcely agrees with the advertisement of Vos's benefit.

courtier; but after murdering every body in the play, and the part too, for three nights, gave up the fruitless attempt and the hopeless season, and told the young men they had better depend upon their "shop-boards" rather than the boards of the theatre for a living.²

For data concerning this brief and melancholy season—we if we may dignify it by so designating it—we are almost wholly dependent on the *Dramatic Life*, the *Gazette* maintaining its usual silence, and the *Enquirer* contributing only three advertisements. Even "Melpomene," "Dramaticus & Co.," *et al.*, held aloof. The first reference to current events is an advertisement of an "Amateur Concert," vocal and instrumental, to be given at the Theatre, Saturday evening, June 10, by Mr. King "with the assistance of several Gentlemen Amateurs, who have kindly tendered their services."³ The same paper displays a card which announces that the Theatre "will open (for a few nights only) on Monday Evening next" when *Catharine and Petruchio*, an abbreviated version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, will be presented together with the afterpiece of *How To Die for Love*. The wording of this notice should effectually settle all doubts concerning the recent benefits of Vos and Mrs. Ludlow; this was patently to be the first performance of the revived Ludlow-Vos establishment. June 14, the "interesting Melo Drama (never performed here), called Twenty Years Ago, or The Unjust Sentence" was advertised for the following evening with *The Village Lawyer* and *Sprigs of Laurel* completing the bill. Of the wicked *Abaellino* there is no mention. But there is not lacking melancholy confirmation of Ludlow's depressing narrative. On June 7, Vos calls to public attention, not his histrionic activities, but his readiness to do "sign and ornamental painting." This notice confirms Ludlow's assertion that he had engaged in this work in St. Louis before. The same *Enquirer* which advertises the final bill of plays also presents this, under the circumstances, pathetic announcement:

² Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, pp. 192-93.

³ *St. Louis Enquirer*, June 7, 1820.

Painting & Gilding. N. M. Ludlow proffers his services to the inhabitants of St. Louis in the above branches, on the most reasonable terms. He will execute every description of *coach*, *Sign* and *Ornamental Painting*; likewise painting in *distemper*—Also, *Gilding* in all its varieties. MRS. LUDLOW will execute every description of painting in *water colours*—Fancy pieces for Drawing Rooms, ladies satten capes, Reticules, Trimmings for Dresses, Fans, Orders in any of the above branches left at the house of the subscriber, or at the office of the St. Louis Enquirer, will meet with punctuality and dispatch.

N.B. Maps coloured, Bed Canopys painted, at from \$10 to 50.

This notice runs through July 26. Success should have been theirs. What a thrill it must have given the drama-lovers of St. Louis to have their picture-frames gilded by Abaellino, the Great Bandit, or their reticules ornamented by Angela, the fainting heroine of *The Castle Spectre!* Together with Lewis, who had been doing engraving on the side since March,⁴ Ludlow made up and framed engravings of Chester Harding's portrait of Daniel Boone, the painter kindly helping with his advice; at first, sales were good, but the artists can hardly have expected to dispose of a great many in the St. Louis of that day, and they brought only a dollar apiece. Meanwhile Ludlow and King undertook a short and unsuccessful tour of the neighboring villages, giving programs of "songs and recitations." Finally they all gave up in despair. Ludlow, although he had grown so attached to St. Louis that he had determined to make his home there, departed for Nashville to act under Collins and Jones, leaving his wife and child in the care of his friends, the Henrys. And Vos? He evidently fared no better, for on June 12, through the columns of the friendly *Enquirer*, he notified his creditors that he was going to ask the justice of the peace "to be permitted to take the benefit of the several laws of this territory concerning insolvent debtors." Apparently painting was no more lucrative on the west bank of the Father of Waters than tragedy and comedy.

But you cannot keep a good man down. The erstwhile

⁴ *Ibid.*, March 22-May 3, 1820.

painter's passion for the stage was too strong to be extinguished by such a little thing as bankruptcy, and by September we find him at it again. In the *Enquirer* of the sixth of that month we find him thus addressing his public:

THEATRE. JOHN H. VOS has the honor to inform his numerous acquaintances, and the public in general, that aided by his friends he has been enabled once more to refit a house for Theatrical amusement. This evening at the old Court House will be presented by the *Thespian Corps* Dr. Home's much admired and celebrated tragedy of *Douglass or the Noble Shepherd*. To conclude with the laughable farce of the *Village Lover*.

Of the casting nothing is revealed, but probably Mrs. Vos, as well as her spouse, participated, though whether as the noble shepherd or his distracted mother, we can only guess. It will be noticed that the Thespians had for some reason deserted their theatre and returned to the court house, I suspect because it was cooler. For Saturday, September 23, Schiller's *The Robbers* was announced, "with entire new scenery," both in the *Gazette* (September 20) and the *Enquirer* (September 23). It was to be followed by *Raising the Wind*, and, according to the older paper, between the two the audience was to be regaled with "Collins' much admired ODE of Alexander's Feast, or The Power of Music." Those curious to know anything of the characters were referred to the bills. What a pity that no one sought to preserve one of these for our inspection a century after the event! At least one more bill was offered for public delectation, Charles Kemble's *Point of Honor* or *The School for Soldiers* and the farce *Intrigue*. Originally set for October 11,⁵ the pieces were, I presume, presented on the fourteenth. The *Gazette* for the eleventh, the original date, notified the theatregoers that "in consequence of one of the Society being indisposed, the representation of the—'POINT OF HONOR, OR SCHOOL FOR SOLDIERS,' is unavoidably postponed, until Saturday Evening, October 14, 1820." With that entertainment, Vos and his amateurs apparently closed their doors once more, and

⁵ *Mo. Gaz.*, October 4, and *St. Louis Enquirer*, October 7, 1820.

there ensued a hiatus of two months in the theatrical progress of St. Louis. But that was all.

The *Enquirer* of December 2 signalized the resumption of the campaign.

The Theatre will open in this place in a few days, under the superintendence of Messrs. Collins & Jones. This company has performed with applause in Cincinnati, Lexington, & Nashville. The celebrated Mrs. Groshon belongs to the company.

Which theatre was to be used, the statement does not disclose, but Ludlow reveals it as the Thespian structure on Main Street. He had been since leaving St. Louis a member of the Collins and Jones troupe, then playing in Nashville. He says that Jones several times sounded him out on the theatrical possibilities of St. Louis. "It was very evident to me he had some project in his head of forming a circuit in the West which should embrace Cincinnati and Nashville, and perhaps St. Louis. In Nashville and Cincinnati he had theatres already."⁶ Ludlow, speaking from experience, was discouraging in his replies, but, finding the man determined and probably somewhat suspicious that Ludlow wanted to keep him out of his own particular pasture, he referred him to Isaac N. Henry.

In a few days after the termination of my re-engagement Mr. Henry's letter arrived, bearing an answer that was satisfactory to Mr. Jones, and he made a proposal for me and my wife to perform with them in St. Louis, saying at the same time that he would also make an offer of engagement to Mr. Vos and wife, if they wished to join the company. Of this I assured him there was no doubt, as Mr. Vos was always anxious to play whenever an opportunity occurred.⁷

So the company set out for its new field of activities. No one in the least interested in the history of the American theatre should fail to read Ludlow's account of this hegira.⁸ The picture of these ardent players fighting their way by buggy and horseback through swollen streams and over fallen

⁶ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁸ *Ibid.*, chap. xx.

timber in a cold and stormy night, and putting up in rude cabins, the owner of one of which was so hostile that Jones slept with a pistol in each hand, is as stirring as any tale of adventure. One of the company was a well-known actress from the New York stage traveling with a small child in her arms! It took them eight days to make the trip. And some of our present-day troupers feel aggrieved at the "hardships" they are called upon to endure!

Who was "the celebrated Mrs. Groshon"? And why was her presence in the company deemed worthy of especial mention in the advance notice? Allston Brown in his *History of the American Stage* gives her Christian name as Belinda, and states that she was born in England.⁹ According to his note on her, she was at the famous Park Theatre in New York until 1819. Until 1816 she was known as Mrs. Goldson. Turning to Dr. Odell's more detailed and also more accurate record, we find that she first appeared in New York in 1813, and he refers to her as "a newcomer of importance . . . for the heavy tragedy."¹⁰ At first she was associated with some actor-rebels at the New Theatre, Broadway, but she soon deserted to the Park where she appeared off and on until 1818 when she retired.¹¹ Perhaps she was disgruntled by the uncomplimentary criticisms of her efforts in the new *American Monthly Magazine*.¹² She traveled West, and in 1820 became a member of the newly formed Collins and Jones Company. Jones, by the way, had been with her at the Park, where he had played old men, and which he quitted at about the same time.¹³ Ludlow says that he, as a boy of sixteen, saw Jones's début there in 1811.¹⁴ Brown says that Mrs. Groshon died in Cincinnati in 1822, let us hope not as a result of the hardships endured on her journey to St. Louis.

⁹ T. Allston Brown, *History of the American Stage*, p. 152.

¹⁰ Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, II, 413.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 517.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 480.

¹⁴ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

According to Ludlow, the event justified only too well his pessimistic prophecies concerning the season now undertaken. He asserts that it was opened about December 10 with *The Soldier's Daughter*, a comedy by Cherry, in the cast of which, as he gives it, we find several old friends: Governor Heartall, Mr. Jones; Frank Heartall, Ludlow; Charles Woodly, Lewis; Young Malfort, Vos; Ferret, Cargill; Timothy Quaint, Frethy; Servant, Pilley; Widow Cheerly, Mrs. Groshon; Mrs. Malfort, Mrs. Ludlow; Susan, Mrs. Vos.¹⁵ Mr. Groshon, he asserts, was not an actor, but "treasurer and ticket-seller for the company" and, according to his understanding, Jones's partner; yet his name appears in one of the casts advertised, though not for a principal part.¹⁶ To this performance of *The Soldier's Daughter* I have come across no reference in the press, the first advertisement appearing on December 13, when the *Gazette* displayed the following announcement, which would seem to suggest that again Ludlow's memory was playing him false:

The friends of the Drama are respectfully informed that the THEATRE will be opened This Evening, Dec. 13th. When will be presented a celebrated Tragedy called the APOSTATE, written by R. Shiel, Esq. Florinda—Mrs. Groshon. After which will be added a Farce in two acts called the OLD MAID Mrs. Harlow—Mrs. Groshon.

This looks to me like the notice of the inauguration of the season. Evenings of performance are announced as Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays.

As to the exact number of performances given during the season now commencing, we cannot make any definite calculation. All advertisements in the *Gazette* were printed on Wednesday, all in the *Enquirer* on Saturday. To only two Monday productions have we references extant. One was advertised in the *Gazette* for Wednesday, January 31, but was, according to a writer in the *Enquirer*, actually staged the following evening; probably bad weather caused a postpone-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹⁶ *St. Louis Enquirer*, February 10, 1821.

ment. The last performance was presumably given April 14, when Jones took his benefit. That means that the company was here seventeen weeks. If they gave three performances a week, which they probably did not, that would make a total of fifty-one. I have found in the two papers references to a possible maximum of twenty; and to this we may perhaps add *The Soldier's Daughter* described by Ludlow. Others there were in all likelihood, but not, I think, thirty. Nevertheless, despite evidence that attendance languished regrettably, the season can scarcely have been quite as disastrous as Ludlow would have us believe. He describes it as "short and unprofitable, and a mere repetition of what I had previously experienced,"¹⁷ and gives the time of Jones's departure as "early in March," more than a month too soon.

The following bills were advertised in the *Enquirer*: *She Stoops To Conquer* and *Lovers' Quarrels*; *Venice Preserved* and *No Song, No Supper*; *The School for Scandal* and *The Purse*; *The Broken Sword* and *Animal Magnetism*; *The Castle Spectre* and *The Children in the Wood*; *The Devil's Bridge* and *Fortune's Frolic*; *Pizarro* and *The Sleeping Draught*; *The Gamester* and *The Lying Valet*; *The Plains of Chippewa* and *The Fortunes of War*; *The Busy Body* and *A Tale of Mystery*; and *John Bull* and *The Broken Sword*. The *Gazette* proffers a shorter list: *The Dramatist* and *The Purse*; *Richard III* and *The Day after the Wedding*; *Richard III* and *The Devil To Pay*; and *The Broken Sword* and *Catharine and Petruchio* (probably played the next evening). There are, besides, in the critical communications references to *Macbeth*, *Jane Shore*, *Speed the Plough*, and *The Foundling of the Forest*. All in all this was not a bad program. It had dignity of a sort, and it certainly was not lacking in variety. If we count *Catharine and Petruchio*, there were three of Shakespeare's plays, *Macbeth* (with Mrs. Hanna) and *Richard III* (with Vos), the latter twice. There were also good comedies, one

¹⁷ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-15.

each from Goldsmith and Sheridan, farces, melodramas, tragedies, and even a melodramatic opera, *The Devil's Bridge*.

For details of the acting we must have recourse again to the volunteer critics. The first of these who modestly subscribed himself "Omnes" held forth in the *Gazette* of January 10. He composed a long letter urging his fellow-citizens to support the "very respectable company of Comedians, who, we are sorry to add, have not received that encouragement which has hitherto accompanied similar exhibitions, in this place, and to which their numbers and talents, justly entitle them." He says that there are fifteen in the company, and observes that "actors must eat." Several, he asserts, possess talents of very superior grade.

Mrs. Groshong [*sic*], Messrs. Ludlow, Jones and Vos, would do honor to any stage in the union, although the two latter are apt to step out of their proper lines. Mr. Jones, in Comic old-men, and the general line of low comedy, will seldom or never fail of giving full satisfaction, but his forte certainly does not lie in Tragedy, or in genteel comedy—Mr. Vos always has been and we trust will continue to be a favorite in the more weighty line of Tragedy Villains, but we consider such characters as Old Marlow, old Malfort and Mr. Fainwould, as by no means calculated to bring forth his abilities. Mr. L. appears (as we think very justly) to be a general favorite. Mrs. G. is certainly superior to any actress we have ever seen on these boards.—The only person who could bear a comparison with her was Mrs. Turner, who is still remembered with pleasure by many of the St. Louis audience. . . . On the whole we consider the present company the best that has ever appeared in this place, and deserving much better support than they have received.

After registering some complaint of the casting, for instance Henry in *Speed the Plough* and Gloster in *Jane Shore*, he concludes with the following advice:

We would likewise observe, that a little caution is necessary with respect to the proper use of oaths, on the stage; and that, although it may please a few, to hear an old man calling his son "a damn'd dog," yet, I would advise the actor not to introduce it more than once in each sentence, as it is likely to pall upon the more respectable part of the audience.

On February 3, we find "NUMPO & co.," pouring forth a lengthy effusion, full of high-sounding phrases, moved by the emotions he experienced at the first and second productions of "the grand melo drama of 'The Broken Sword.'" Although space, time, and patience are wanting for repetition of the effusion in its entirety, a portion is surely entitled to quotation. After many didactic reflections on the moral efficacy of the drama, the writer consents to become specific. The production he praises in the most eulogistic terms, saying "we almost fancied being transported to a world of visionary beings." But he did object to the "buffoonery" of the actor who played Pablo. So effective was Jones in the character of Estevan that "it was difficult to convince our senses that his misery was not real."

"But every eye with splendor shone,
And cast its smiles on one alone."

That one, was the interesting character of the dumb orphan, Myrtillo, which received new graces, and excited greater interest from the easy and correct *action* of Mrs. Groshon. Her intelligent countenance gave a meaning to every action which fully compensated for the want of speech.

Here he was at last content to "sign off" and append his pseudonym in capital letters—"NUMPO & CO."

Thinking over this disquisition, one is inclined to try to conjure up visions of the magnificent scenery, the work of Douberman, which had such an exhilarating effect on the stage of the Thespian Theatre. So successful was the display that they were encouraged to conquer new worlds, and so, on February 10, presented "(for the first time in St. Louis) a Grand Melo Dramatic Opera in 3 acts called the DEVIL'S BRIDGE; With the original Music.—Leader of the Orchestra, etc. Guibert."¹⁸ I append the cast, the musical numbers, and the synopsis of the scenes:

¹⁸ *St. Louis Enquirer*, February 10, 1821.

Baron Toraldi.....	Mr. Vos
Belino.....	Lewis
Marcelli.....	Jones
Paoli.....	Cargill
Fabricio.....	Groshon
Julio.....	Miss Hanna
Petro.....	Mr. Henderson
Florian.....	Douberman
Countess Rosalvina.....	Mrs. Groshon
Claudine.....	Hanna
Lauretta.....	Jones

In the course of the opera the following SONGS & DUETTS: Songs.—“Behold, in His Soft, Expressive Face,” Mr. Lewis.—“Is There a Heart That Never Lov’d,” Mr. Lewis.—“Though Love Is Warm a While,” Mr. Lewis.—“The Beautiful Maid,” Mr. Douberman.—“It Is but Fancy’s Sketch,” Mr. Lewis.—Duet, “The Stag through the Forest,” Lewis and Douberman. Duet, “My Early Day What Joy Was Thine,” Mrs. Groshon & Lewis.—“Where Shall the Lover Rest,” Mr. Lewis.—“Be Mine Dear Maid,” Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Lewis was doubtless cast more because of his voice than because of any histrionic talent, for this is the only time we find him in the lead.

And the scenery.—Douberman must have been a genius.

Act 1, Scene 1.—A large room in a Village Inn, staircase leading to the upper apartment.

Act. 2, Scene.—The outside of Marcelli’s house; on the right a Bower; back of the house a garden with Palisade fence. In the distance, the mountains of Piedmont.

Act. 3.—A Hall in the castle of Lesanne.—2. A dungeon in which Belino is confined.

4th, THE DEVIL’S BRIDGE.

With a Romantic View of the Piedmont Alps, on the right of the Bridge Antonio’s cottage, with the sign of “Powder, and that for the chase.” When Toraldi arrives on the Bridge it is blown up, and the opera concludes with the re-union of Belino and Rosalvina.

According to Ludlow, the spectacle the musical scene painter evolved for this occasion made the “hit” of the season. It was a tableau representing the Washington family

with Cargill as the Father of his Country, Mrs. Ludlow as Martha, Miss Seymour as Nellie Custis, all three bearing marked resemblances to their respective originals. Douberman himself as a colored servant completed the group. The artist painted the proper background and made himself financially responsible for all accessories. Ludlow gives a glowing account of the scene.

When the night came the house was crowded to an inconvenient fullness, and all were anxious to discover what the peculiar performance was in which they were to have an exhibit of "Washington and His Family." As soon as all was ready for the tableau, the band in the orchestra began the national air of "Hail Columbia," the curtain rose, strong white lights from behind the scenes threw a bright halo around the figures, and for a few moments there was the silence of astonishment,—then came a thunder of applause that sensibly shook the building. I do not believe I ever beheld as much rapture displayed by an audience in my whole life. The picture was presented three times that night to gratify the audience, who seemed unwilling even then to leave the theatre. I will only observe further, it was repeated the next play-night for Mrs. Ludlow's benefit, which had been previously arranged for that night, and the house was again full. Mr. Jones gave one more night, the closing night of the season, when the tableau was again repeated, the closing night being a full house, but leaving the management an empty treasury.¹⁹

The scene pictured by Ludlow is one to stir the imagination. Yet, unfortunately, his account cannot be accepted without question. He says that this was "a species of entertainment entirely new to the stage of that day, at least in the West." But Mr. Charles R. Staples in his paper on the early amusements of Lexington makes the following assertion in recounting the stage-spectacle to which that town was treated in 1815, six years prior to this: ". . . one of the prime favorites used as a tableau was the reproduction of Washington and his family, a copy of which by the Artist Inman now hangs in the Reading Room of the Lexington Library."²⁰ It is interesting to note that Dr. Rusk names

¹⁹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-14.

²⁰ Charles R. Staples, *The Amusements and Diversions of Early Lexington*.

Cargill as one of the actors who may have appeared in Lexington in 1815.²¹ Nor can I believe that, if a feature so popular was to be included in the final bill of the season, the management would neglect to mention it in the newspaper advertisement.

Over the remaining notices I shall run quickly. On March 31, "PHILO" made use of the *Enquirer* to express his regret that the public had neglected the benefit "Miss Seymour and the Miss Hanna's," in *The Foundling of the Forest*, and hopes for better things for Mrs. Hanna in "Shakespeare's noble play of Macbeth." "The line which she walks on our boards is not less useful than respectable; and her claims on public patronage as the mother of a large family are of that nature which should not be passed over in silence." Let us hope they were not. "TOWN," on March 24, congratulates "Mr. Henderson, a comedian of considerable promise . . . in *daring* to bring forward [for his benefit] an American Play," *The Plains of Chippewa*. For his benefit, Cargill selected *The Busy Body*, in which he had apparently scored the year before. The season was brought to a close with Jones's benefit, *John Bull* and the ever popular *Broken Sword*. After that the comedians departed. Ludlow says that in spite of his empty treasury, "Mr. Jones settled squarely with all his company, and I believe with every person who had dealings with him during his sojourn in the town."²²

In recounting the events in what we are pleased to term "the legitimate drama," I have neglected another form of entertainment which the amusement-seeking citizens were offered just about the time the Jones Company arrived. Under the head of "Be Merry & Wise" and the emblem of the American Eagle, in the *Gazette* of December 6, 1820, a Mr. and Mrs. Potter respectfully informed the ladies and gentlemen of St. Louis and its vicinity, that their next Exhibition would take place on Thursday evening, December 7, at the

²¹ Rusk, *The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier*, I, 368 n.

²² Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

house lately occupied by the St. Louis Thespian Company, presumably the quondam court house. The exhibition was to be a program of sleight-of-hand tricks worthy of the veteran Leitensdorfer himself (I wonder if he attended), with songs, "The Wealth of the Cottage" and "Gaffer Gray," and feats of ventriloquism thrown in for good measure. A special feature was to be "The NE PLUS ULTRA. The most interesting and impenetrable secret in the arcana of Philosophical Illusion; which drew crowded houses for sixty successive nights in Boston, New York and Philadelphia." On December 14, "feeling themselves much indebted to the inhabitants of the place, for the very liberal encouragement they have experienced during their stay in this town, etc.," the same couple proclaimed through the medium of the same publication that Mr. Potter would on "THURSDAY EVENING, for the second and last time, perform the part of the ANTI-COMBUSTIBLE MAN-SALAMANDER!!" and also display his ventriloquial powers. What was more, they would together execute a fancy dance. Probably they did, and probably drew crowded houses.

In the midst of this theatrically crowded season, the stage of St. Louis lost one of its most ardent supporters in Isaac N. Henry, the young editor of the *Enquirer* whose sudden death was sadly reported in his own paper on January 6, 1821. He was only twenty-three, but already an outstanding citizen in the frontier community.

.

Again we have a case of a feast and a famine, more exactly a famine after a feast. The record for the next four years is barren indeed, and I shall hurry over it as speedily as I can. One of the most interesting occurrences was the publication in May, 1821, of *The Pedlar*, an original farce by Alphonso Wetmore, paymaster in the Army of the United States. The advertisement in the *Enquirer* (May 12) states that it was "written for the ST. LOUIS THESPIANS, by whom it was performed with great applause." Dr. Rusk has discovered that this play was revived in later years, not only in

St. Louis, but also in Lexington.²³ Of the date of its production by the Thespians, we have no definite evidence. The published edition, however, gives the cast which took part in the *première* performance. The male rôles were filled by members of the Thespian Society, the female by actresses from the Collins and Jones troupe, Mrs. Groshon, Mrs. Hanna, and Miss Seymour. The piece must, therefore, have been produced during the stay of that company in St. Louis. From the identity of the amateurs we may learn something of the make-up of the Thespian Society. These men were: T. Goddard, a conveyancer; W. McGunnegle, a corporal in the St. Louis Guards, no regular occupation given in the directory of 1821; W. B. Alexander, a clerk in the receiver's office; Captain Benjamin F. Larned, like the author, an army paymaster; David B. Hoffman, a merchant; J. A. Paxton, a printer and the publisher of the first city directory; and E. L. Pearson, whose vocation cannot be determined.

The Pedlar is a farce of absolutely no literary merit whatsoever. It is not, however, without local color. The author does not specify just where the scene is supposed to be laid. The crusty frontiersman in whose log home much of the action takes place is named "Old Prairie"; yet his rather half-witted son says he owns the finest "barr dogs in Ole Kentucky." The plot, such as it is, is centered about the wiles of a Yankee peddler called Nutmeg, apparently because these descendants of Autolycus were in the habit of palming off wooden nutmegs on gullible housewives, and his successful wooing of Old Prairie's "nutbrown" niece Pecanne. The action involves various disguises and consequent cases of mistaken identity, and ends in the reunion of a loquacious Bunker Hill veteran, Old Continental, and his seagoing son, Harry Emigrant, together with the discovery of a will which leaves the old man wealthy. The piece is chiefly interesting, as I said above, because of its local color and also because of the light it throws on certain features of the staging. The settlers re-

²³ Rusk, *op. cit.*, I, 421, 421 n.

veal a marked distrust of all Yankees. Goods may be purchased either for money, whole or cut, or coon skins. Old Prairie is proud of his hog and hominy, and Nutmeg carries in his pack an assortment of articles which for variety would suggest a modern department store or corner drug store.

A single brief excerpt will be sufficient to show the flavor of the dialogue:

NUTMEG: My sweet little mermaid, what have you there?

PECANNE: Stockings; do you wish to buy them?

NUTMEG: Yes, my dear little wood nymph, if you will take merchandise.

PECANNE: What have you? O! [a lantern] by the powers of love, the very thing my uncle is in want of. I'll give you this whole bundle for it.

NUTMEG: Here, take it, and this cup, and a kiss to boot. (*Kisses her*)

PECANNE: What a sweet breath! He don't chew tobacco, I'm sure. (*aside*) EXIT.²⁴

When I said that the printed edition of *The Pedlar* throws light on the methods of staging in use on the St. Louis stage at the time, I referred particularly to such directions as "the scene opens" and "the scene closes," which reveal that the stage manager was still employing the old-fashioned "flats" which were slid back and forth in grooves parallel to the footlights, instead of the drops which were lowered from above.

As I have stated elsewhere, it was during these lean years that the project to erect a permanent theatre inspired by Turner in 1818 was finally abandoned. Thomas Hempstead and Christopher M. Price published a notice of a subscribers' meeting, in the *Enquirer* of March 23, 1822, to "take into consideration the present situation of that concern [the New Theatre] and to derive [*sic*] ways and means to discharge the debt of the same." Dissolution followed during the ensuing year.

Not until the last day of 1822 was there, so far as I can determine from available records, a single theatrical perform-

²⁴ Alphonso Wetmore, *The Pedlar*, Act I, Scene 1.

ance of any sort. On that date, the Thespians once more gave signs of life and presented a play. What this play was I do not know, the brief commendatory editorial in the *Missouri Republican* (successor to the *Gazette*) not revealing it. But the editor's remark does imply that the Thespians were not at this time well known in the community. "On Tuesday evening last," he says, "we were gratified with the exhibition of the Thespian Society at the Theatre. This society is composed of a number of young gentlemen of this place, whose performance did credit to *them*, and afforded a rational amusement to the audience."²⁵ All that survives of this evening's proceedings is a long-winded address in heroic couplets which, a week later, the *Republican* thoughtfully handed down to posterity. The "poem" *en masse* will not be inflicted upon the helpless reader, but I cannot forbear quoting the first few lines, since they appear to throw some light on the players' state of mind and also, to use an awkward phrase, "of act." The editor, perhaps in self-defense, declares that it is printed "by request":

If on the Mississippi's western shore,
 They who had never trod the stage before,
 Studious to please, and doubtful of their power
 Should try to chase the dullness of an hour,
 Would you receive the effort with a stare,
 And play the critic on our humble fare?

And so on—through fifty more lines. Yet at that the address is far from bad for its kind.

Whatever may have been the play thus poetically and prayerfully introduced to the public, its producers apparently intended it to be, as it were, an opening shot. The *Republican* of January 9, 1823 (the same which published the address), contained a notice to the effect that the Thespian Society was rehearsing *John Bull* and *No Song, No Supper*, and would produce them "after a few days." Both of these pieces had been given by the Jones Company two years before.

²⁵ *Mo. Rep.*, January 2, 1823.

Nearly a month later, February 5 to be exact, the Thespians informed the public of their intention of giving *The Rivals* its local *première* "in a few days," and with it the farce of *The Rendezvous*. One more effort, and the amateurs disappear for another year. According to the *Republican* of June 25, they planned a bill, *The Poor Gentleman* and *Monsieur Tounson* (first time in St. Louis), for the following evening. The performances were probably given, but of the fact there is, I think, no proof extant.

A letter signed "A Citizen" in the *Republican* of January 9, 1823, catches my eye. It is the outcry of a strong-hearted individual who obviously preferred civic improvements to amateur acting. "Sir," he begins,

so much has been said and written, in vain, about the condition of our streets, that I despair of ever seeing them better. And why? The *ostensible* reason is that it is expensive:—not the true one; or if it were, it is not a valid one. The citizens of this place spend enough in a single night, at a public ball, or at the theatre, to make necessary improvements in Main Street; therefore want of ability is not the reason for the culpable neglect of the streets. I know many who, on any occasion of amusement, think nothing of parting with nine or ten dollars; while, to enjoy that amusement, they are under the necessity of wading to the knees in mud.

And yet the managers bewailed their poor houses! However, in three months, the town was formally incorporated as a city and, perhaps to eradicate evils such as this, it elected a physician as its first mayor. In his inaugural address Dr. Lane recommended street-paving, and let us hope that hereafter the theatregoers did not have to wade to the box-office. At all events, they certainly did not squander their wealth on plays and play-actors during the next few years.

In July of that year there appeared "for one night only, Mr. Dalton, Principal Comedian of the Charleston, Savannah and Augusta Theatres" who at least planned to regale the citizens on the Glorious Fourth with a sort of animated travelogue which he called "The Mail Coach or Adventures from New York to Charleston." He intended to commence

at eight o'clock, and charged a dollar—gallery, fifty cents. In August there were apparently performances by an equestrian corps in a "circus . . . erected in the rear of the old theatre."²⁶ Then in October Mr. Dalton came back, this time plus Mrs. Dalton, who would render "an occasional address." Her husband "respectfully informs the Ladies and Gentlemen of St. Louis, that he will for the last time, have the honor of appearing before them." For particulars, the curious were referred to the usual "bills."²⁷

So much for 1823. Even less was offered in 1824.

In an *Enquirer* dated both February 7 and 9, we see that Lord Byron was not without his emulators in the community. "A number of young gentlemen of St. Louis, animated with the holy cause of Grecian Liberty," proposed to give one or two theatrical performances to raise money for Greeks. Whether the struggling Greeks were ever aided dramatically in St. Louis I cannot tell. There is no further reference to the matter.

On March 1, "A Friend of the Drama" wrote in the *Republican* that "a gentleman lately arrived, from Louisville," said that he had heard that Alexander Drake was planning a visit to St. Louis with his company, but there is no evidence that this promised treat was ever realized. Indeed, except for the welcome intelligence that Main Street has been paved, we find only a Mr. Snell who persistently and, I conclude, successfully entertained the populace with his "Philosophical and Mechanical Theatre." He was, so he said in the *Republican* of July 5, a "Professor of Natural Philosophy and Practical Electrician late from Lexington Ky. and who has performed in the principal cities both in Europe and America." He demonstrated his "many phenomena of Art and Nature, to wit, in Electricity, Chymistry, Optics, Mechanism and the Art of Deception [no doubt chiefly the last], in a new and pleasing manner calculated to expose imposters and pretenders to the Art &," at Vauxhall Gardens, a new

²⁶ *Ibid.*, August 6, 1823.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, August 22, 1823.

resort in the city. He has several advertisements, each one, it seems, longer than the one before. I shall let them pass, except to observe that he was still "at it" in September, this time with fireworks. The *Republican* of September 6 arouses our hopes once more, but only to dash them again. D. E. Cuyler, secretary of the St. Louis Thespian Society, called a meeting of the members "on business of much importance." But there the matter ends. What the important business was is not for us to know.

Before we can glean any items from the pages of the *Republican*, 1825 is more than half over. But, by July, the prospect becomes more encouraging. In the first place, we learn that times have greatly improved. "We are sure that more building will be done this year than has been done for three or four years past. This shews that there is a demand for houses and stores, and that business is thriving." Where there is prosperity, there we often find the muses of comedy and tragedy. And, sure enough, the same issue (July 4) apprises the drama-lovers of the arrival of "Mr. Vaughan, from the Boston, New York and New Orleans Theatres."²⁸ This gentleman had no play to offer, but he did promise a

Moral, Instructive and Satirical LECTURE, written to ridicule the *Vices, Follies, Manners and Customs of the World*—interspersed with several *Favorite, Serious and Comic Songs*—assisted by his son 10 years of age, and his daughter, only 7, who have been the admiration of all who have beheld them. They possess the most extraordinary talent, for children of their years, such as portraying the passion, and imitating the various frivolities of the present day. They are the only native plants in the bud that ever appeared, and are pronounced the greatest prodigies of their age.

The first fruits of prosperity! All this was to be at the Court House on July 5. The whole thing is reminiscent in a way of the old devices used in puritanical communities to get around the legal prohibition of play-acting.

²⁸ Dr. Odell reports the arrival of Vaughan and his daughter in New York in 1830 with apparently the same program (*op. cit.*, III, 476).

THE MIRROR; OR, A HINT AT ALL. In the course of the evening Miss Vaughan will give a whimsical description, in character, of AN OLD WOMAN OF EIGHTY, who travelled by steam to see the show. After which Master VAUGHAN will sing the celebrated song of the CHAPTER OF DONKIES.

Apparently this terrible entertainment accomplished its purpose, for it was repeated, with variations, three times within a month, all performances except the first being given at Vauxhall Gardens. But there really were better things to come.

The first of these was of a musical nature, a "grand vocal concert" by "Mr. Pearman, principal Tenore of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden and English Opera House, London, and MADAME PEARMAN, whose brilliant success has placed her on the list of first female artists, who have visited the United States." This event was promised in the *Republican* of July 13 "in the course of a few days, the gentleman being at present indisposed." Pearman was a popular singer from the Park Theatre, New York, where he had made his *début* as Count Belino in *The Devil's Bridge* in 1823.²⁹ He was a manly looking fellow without much histrionic ability, but with a very sweet and pleasing voice. Allston Brown gives 1792 as the year of his birth, in Manchester, England; hence he was about thirty-three when St. Louis first had the pleasure of seeing and hearing him.³⁰ Mrs. Pearman did not make her first bow to the New York public until 1828, three years after this date, and did not then win the popular favor enjoyed by her husband.³¹

Whether or not the Pearmans ever gave their projected concert, I am unable to report. But the *Republican* of the following Wednesday (July 20) brought what must have been indeed welcome news. This was the announcement of the St. Louis *première* of *Masaniello* or *Dumb Girl of Portici* with "Miss Placide" as Fenella, to be preceded by the farce

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁰ Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

³¹ Odell, *op. cit.*, III, 325.

Simpson & Co. Which Miss Placide it was who was to go through the tragic pantomime of the mute, the advertisement does not specify, but I think it was the beloved Jane from Caldwell's New Orleans Company, the object of Edwin Forrest's early passion. Caroline, the eldest sister, had not been "Miss Placide" for some time, but Mrs. Waring. Eliza was in New York the following month;³² this, however, would not necessarily rule her out. Who was back of this production and those before it, the paper does not say. Nor does it inform us who else took part. Possibly Pearman appeared, but, if he did, his name is not mentioned, and I scarcely think an artist of his metropolitan consequence would have submitted to such a slight. The scenery promised to surpass that of *The Devil's Bridge*. I wonder if Douberman painted it.

(In the last act, which will be entirely new Scenes [Probably some of Douberman's pieces were resurrected for the previous acts.], will be realized the following scenes:) GRAND ERUPTION OF MOUNT VESUVIUS. TERRIFIC EXPLOSION!! *Forked Lightnings Rend the Sky!* THE BURNING LAVA Impetuously flows down the side of the Mountain, and the whole country becomes awfully ILLUMINATED!!! FENELLA plunges into the Sea! GRAND DISPLAY OF FIRE WORKS; POPULAR TUMULT, AND DEATH OF MASANIELLO.

All this in the Thespian Theatre? I for one should certainly have sat close to a good wide exit. The latter part of the advertisement reveals the surprising fact that this was not the company's first appearance, for it says:

That successful piece, AMBROSE GWINETTE, which elicited from a fashionable audience of Wednesday last, its usual high commendations, with John Howard Payne's unrivalled drama, CLARI, the MAID OF MILAN, (the representation of which, a number of Ladies and Gentlemen were prevented from witnessing on Saturday Evening, in consequence of the unfavorable appearance of the weather), will be enacted on FRIDAY EVENING NEXT.

And that is the sum total of my information concerning this interesting but apparently very brief season. Mr. Vaughan and his infant prodigies occupied far more space in the press.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 173.

But in October, we find our old friends the Thespians once more in the lists. I should like to know if the valiant Vos was still with them, forgetting his tragic lines but retaining his popularity. But his name at least has disappeared for all time, and if we meet him again, we do so unawares. The *Republican* of October 24 does, however, bring us important tidings. St. Louis had a new theatre, a brick one.

THEATRE. Church Street. The public are respectfully informed, that the large brick house formerly occupied by Messrs. Scott & Rule, has been fitted up in a style of neatness and elegance, to answer the purpose of a Theatre; no expense having been spared, to render it comfortable and commodious.

The structure so transformed was, be it confessed, a former salt house. This theatre had a comparatively long, if not exactly honorable, career. Time and again was it heartily damned by those constrained to make use of it (Sol Smith called it "the hot house"), but nevertheless it seems to have been accepted as the best available until it went up in flames a decade later. The plays selected for the dedication were Cherry's *The Soldier's Daughter* and *Fortune's Frolic*. They were, however, to be preceded by the "address" inevitable on such occasions. The doors were to be opened at half-past six, and the curtain to rise at seven. The price of admission remained a dollar (children fifty cents) and gentlemen were requested not to smoke. On the last day of the month, the young actors announced that on November 5 they would offer "Sheridan's elegant Comedy of *THE RIVALS*, OF A TRIP TO BATH" and Garrick's *Miss in Her Teens*. The advertisement adds this bit of information: "Gallery seats 50 cents."

There were apparently no other performances in 1825. There had been few enough in all conscience. But, if we look to 1826 for an improvement, we shall be sadly disappointed. My delvings have uncovered but one advertisement for a theatrical performance. That was printed in the *Republican* of February 2. It is headed "THEATRE Church Street LAST NIGHT BUT ONE" (which shows that there had probably been

others since November) and promises Colman's *The Mountaineers* and "the laughable farce" of *Who's the Dupe?* with a song in between. In June and July a Mrs. J. W. Green gave a "Concert of Vocal Music, interspersed with Recitations," probably twice.³³ That was all till November 16 when one Mr. Haymer delivered a recitation of "selected pieces" in Washington Hall, a new boarding-house, and edified the good citizens with an oration on "WOMAN: HER CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE."³⁴ A year later, October 25 to be exact, the *Republican* notified its readers that said orator had been arrested for theft, punished, and, presumably, run out of town.

Then whom should we find again presenting himself to his fellow-citizens but our old friend, Eugene Leitensdorfer, he who had twelve years before given them their first stage-exhibition? This time he is going to "exhibit, by way of narration, the extraordinary adventures and singular anecdotes of his VERY EVENTFUL LIFE: Part of which has been published in London, Baltimore, and other cities. He has undertaken this exhibition to enable him to fulfil the sacred duty of a father." Among other things, he has been, he informs the subscriber to the *Republican*, the manager of a theatre and a showman at Constantinople! This program was to be given two days before Christmas, and it rings down the curtain on perhaps the least fruitful year we shall have to cover. I am glad to be able to report that the lean years were practically over. We shall not meet another so barren.

³³ *Mo. Rep.*, June 29 and July 6, 1826.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, November 16, 1826.

CHAPTER VI

CALDWELL TAKES OVER THE SALT HOUSE,

1827-28

ST. LOUIS was now a very different place from the little frontier settlement of 1815 when the "young gentlemen of the town" invaded the old court house and entertained their friends with *The Budget of Blunders*. It was scarcely even the same place which had made so sorry an impression on Ludlow seven years before. It was an incorporated city with a mayor and a board of aldermen who had cleaned up the town, paved the streets, and done other things to render life more agreeable as well as more healthy. Its population was now approaching five thousand. It had, moreover, given over its easy-going Gallic ways and become a busy, hustling American city. The *Republican* boasts:

Our streets have been crowded for some time past, with heavy wagons, conveying to this port the valuable productions of the soil, for exportation, & reloading with dry-goods, groceries, & in exchange. This is as it should be. Formerly we had to send off our cash, for almost every thing, but now the balance of trade is in our favor, and the surplus produce, the vast amount of Lead and Furs annually exported, bring to us all the foreign articles required, & the cash remains with us.¹

This last fact would be to the promoters of theatricals the one of interest, and apparently it was. The news was carried southward and reached the ears of James H. Caldwell, the famous actor-manager in New Orleans, with results which we shall soon see. On June 21, 1827, the *Republican* printed this proclamation addressed to the citizens of St. Louis:

The Proprietor and Manager of the AMERICAN THEATRE, at New Orleans, begs leave, most respectfully, to announce to the Citizens of St. Louis and its environs, that he is anxious to establish the

¹ *Mo. Rep.*, November 16, 1826.

Drama in their city, upon a liberal and respectable footing. The Manager conceives that, in conjunction with New Orleans and Nashville, St. Louis will enable him to keep the whole of his establishment together, throughout the year, which advantage will afford the lovers of the Drama much better entertainment than they could expect, if a company were divided in the summer and fall, and then, again obliged to be collected together for the winter. The manager intends to bring the whole of his establishment to St. Louis, and he has every confidence in the liberality of its citizens for an ample support.

Every novelty possible will be brought forward, and every exertion made to make the theatre a fashionable and general resort.

JAMES H. CALDWELL

The announcement concludes with the statement that the theatre would be opened about June 25, but there was a slight delay, since the "Comedians" did not arrive, on the steamboat "America" until the twenty-sixth.² The company was undoubtedly a good one, at least in parts. Caldwell himself came along to play the leads, both comedy and tragedy, and Mrs. Tatnall and Miss Placide (Jane, I believe) appeared opposite him. The former lady is one of the most confusing to follow through the mazes of American stage history; one can never tell under what cognomen to look for her. Born in England to the name of Pritchard, she was known successively as Mrs. Tatnall, Mrs. Hartwig, Mrs. Hosack, and Mrs. Pritchard. The names of her first and last husbands, Pemberton and Riley, she never employed professionally. At the time of the first of her St. Louis visits, she had attained only two spouses,³ but she had achieved some little notoriety through the circumstance of her having risen from the sawdust of her second husband's circus-ring to the legitimate boards of the famous Park Theatre in New York. Her genius we may safely question, but of her versatility there can be no

² *Ibid.*, June 28, 1827.

³ Ludlow asserts that she had married Hartwig when she appeared in his theatre in Mobile in the spring of 1827, but I believe him to be in error, since she was still called Mrs. Tatnall (Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, p. 488).

doubt, since she reveled alike in comedy, tragedy (male and female), and equestrian rôles. We shall meet her in various guises many, many times before this chronicle is ended. There was also Mrs. Richard Russell, wife of the stage-manager, who, according to Ludlow, played tragedy and comedy, but was hardly equal to sustaining the characters that circumstances, and not inclination, had placed her in. She was a very pretty woman, with brilliant black eyes, and proved afterwards very effective in soubrettes and handsome widows, which she performed for many years in the different theatres of the South and West.⁴

For musical parts Caldwell provided John Still, a singing-actor with a pleasing tenor voice. Among the other members were: Mrs. Rowe (I believe Mrs. James S.); a "Mr. Jones," I think unquestionably Samuel P., an actor of heavy rôles who had been playing in the South for several years; Jackson Gray, commonly known as "Old Gray" because of the "line" of characters with which he was identified, although according to Allston Brown he was at this time only thirty-one years of age; William McCafferty, comedian and scene painter; and Hartwig, Mrs. Tatnall's third husband. This company can perhaps best be described by the adjective "competent." Yet it elicited commendation of a much more positive type from Joe Cowell, in his somewhat patronizing book of reminiscences. Speaking of the same aggregation as he knew it two years later, he says: "The company, taken collectively, was the best by far on the continent, the gentlemanly though austere nature of Caldwell ensuring to all kindred spirits a lasting and profitable employ [*sic*] under his liberal government."⁵ "Approbation from Sir Hubert Stanley is praise indeed!"

For his theatre Caldwell selected the old salt house. In a

⁴ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

⁵ Joe Cowell, *Thirty Years Passed among the Actors and Actresses in England and America*, p. 85.

letter to James Rees, who published it in his *Dramatic Authors of America*, he states that he leased it for seven years, "with privilege of purchase, and converted it into a theatre, adding a building fifty feet in the rear for a stage."⁶ The claim that he "converted it into a theatre" must not be accepted too literally, for we know that the Thespians had already used it for such a purpose. Yet that he made some changes in the structure there can be no doubt. The *Missouri Observer and Advertiser* of July 25 speaks of the expense to which he had gone "in the erection of a suitable building." He also, we learn from the *Republican* of July 12, tried to "render the house more comfortable" by "making an opening above." (I have already mentioned the fact that Sol Smith later called it "the hot house.") Ludlow's description of the edifice is far from alluring.

The building that Mr. Caldwell found on the ground was a small and dilapidated one that had been used by Messrs. Scott & Rule as a temporary *warehouse* of minor importance, and stood on Second Street, west side, about one hundred feet north of Olive Street. . . . It was certainly a melancholy structure altogether, to make the best of it.⁷

Further on in the *Dramatic Life*, he goes into greater detail. He asserts that Caldwell added about forty feet to the building,

being the stage portion only. Into the old building he put plain, rough benches of pine, one division of which was on an inclined platform, called the "pit"; over this was raised a narrow gallery, with seats of pine; this portion was dignified with the title of "dress-circle boxes," the whole being of the most primitive character and limited capacity.⁸

That the citizens of St. Louis did not respond in the manner expected by Caldwell, we find all too abundant evidence in both the *Republican* and the *Missouri Observer and Adver-*

⁶ James Rees, *The Dramatic Authors of America*, p. 66.

⁷ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 406-7.

tiser of which, unfortunately, I have seen but one issue. Various explanations for the failure of the season are advanced, but there was certainly one very good one. One of the writers of "communications" voices what he implies is a rather general dissatisfaction with the orchestra provided by the management, and another, defending Caldwell, deplors the fact that the musicians had been, one evening, hissed.⁹ But this weakness certainly was not responsible for the debacle, if such it was. The real cause is, I am confident, to be found in the combination of the uncomfortable auditorium and the hot summer weather. That certainly would be sufficient justification. Whatever its cause, the failure of the season was deplored by both papers, and the *Observer* voiced gloomy forebodings concerning its effect on the future theatrical fortunes of the community. It mourned:

This place is not only sufficiently large in point of population, but is more than sufficient in wealth, to support a theatre; and if the houses are not better attended than they have heretofore been, it will be long before we shall have another opportunity of enjoying the delectable amusement which the Drama affords. Will it not go abroad that there is no taste in St. Louis for theatrical representations?¹⁰

Civic pride was suffering.

Let us see what was the "delectable amusement" thus reprehensibly neglected by the St. Louisans of 1827. Assuredly of the repertoire of plays presented there could be little or no complaint; it was varied and included some works of classical standing as well as a number of the varieties which enjoyed wide popularity at that time. In view of the dearth of contemporary records, it is impossible to construct a complete list of the offerings. The company held out from the first week in July until the middle of August, apparently the twenty-third. For our information, we must rely on the two

⁹ *Mo. Rep.*, July 12 and 19, 1827.

¹⁰ *Missouri Observer and Advertiser*, July 25, 1827.

of Linn

11

THEATRE.

(?) The public are respectfully informed, that a few Boxes have been partitioned off, which can be secured for Families, on application to Mr. Rowe, at the Theatre, from 10 till 2 o'clock.

THIS EVENING,

JULY 7, 1827,

Will be presented, Marton's popular and admired COMEDY
(NEVER ACTED HERE,) called

TOWN & COUNTRY,

OR, WHICH IS BEST.

REUBEN GLENROY,	Mr. CALDWELL.
Plastic, - - - -	Still,
Trot, - - - -	Gray,
Christopher Cosey, - - -	Russell,
Rev'd Owen Gleuroy, - -	Jackson,
Jacky Hawbuck, - - -	McCafferty,
Capt. Gleuroy, - - -	Lear,
Williams, - - - -	Sanford,
Ross, - - - -	Higgins,
Evans, - - - -	Murray,
Robin, - - - -	Hartwig,
Hon. Mrs. Glenroy, Mrs. Russell,	
Rosalie Somers, - - -	Rowe,
Mrs. Trot, - - - -	Blaxton,
Mrs. Moreen, - - - -	Higgins,
Goody Hawbuck, - - -	Johns,
Talline, - - - -	Miss Carpenter.

After which, the laughable FARCE of the

PURSE,

OR, THE BENEVOLENT TAR.

Will Steady, (with a song,)	Mr. Russell,
Baron, - - - -	Jackson,
Theodore, - - - -	Sanford,
Edmond, (with the song of the "Galley Slave,")	Still,
Page, (with a Song,)	Miss Russell,
(her first appearance in St. Louis.)	
Sally, - - - -	Mrs. Russell.

(?) Shakespeare's celebrated Tragedy of HAMLET, will be brought forward immediately.—HAMLET, Prince of Denmark. Mr. CALDWELL.—Ophelia, Miss FLAUIDE.

(?) In preparation, the popular Extravaganza of TOM AND JERRY, Walter Scott's celebrated Meta Dramatic Opera of ROBBY, or, Auld Lang Syne, and, the last new Comedy of PAUL FRY.

(?) There has been a place appointed for persons of Color, on every five cents.

(?) DOORS to be opened at half-past 6, and the Curtain to rise at half-past 7 o'clock.

* * * ADMISSION, One Dollar.

†† TICKETS, only admissible on the evening for which they are purchased.

‡‡ CHECKS, not transferrable.

§§ SMOKING, is positively prohibited in the Theatre.

OSB & KELSIE, PRINTERS

PLAYBILL ADVERTISING A PERFORMANCE IN THE SALT HOUSE BY CALDWELL'S COMPANY, IN THE POSSESSION OF THE HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

papers and on nine playbills in the possession of the Harvard College Library. The *Republican* was published only on Thursdays, and the *Observer* is, except for one issue, so far as I know, no longer in existence. There are, however, advertisements for a few bills and critical reviews of several others.

The first playbill is one announcing a performance of *The Stranger* on July 2 with Caldwell himself in the title rôle, Miss Placide as the penitent Mrs. Haller, Mrs. Rowe as the Countess Wintersen, and Mrs. Russell as Charlotte, to which was added *The Rendezvous* with Gray, Russell, McCafferty, Mrs. Russell, and Mrs. Rowe. At the top of the bill is a notice to the effect that the days of performance will be "*Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.*" Admission is to be a dollar, the curtain is to rise at seven-thirty, and smoking is "positively prohibited in the Theatre." Another playbill gives the program for the Fourth of July as *The Soldier's Daughter*, Caldwell playing Frank Heartall and Mrs. Russell, the Widow Cheerly, with *No Song, No Supper* as the afterpiece. On July 6 *The Will* and *The Spoiled Child* served as vehicles for the local début of Mrs. Tatnall, Caldwell appearing with her in the former. The first week of the season was brought to a close with Caldwell as Reuben Glenroy in *Town or Country*, Still as Plastic, Gray as Trot, Russell as Kit Co-sey, Mrs. Russell as the Honorable Mrs. Glenroy, and Mrs. Rowe as Rosalie. The afterpiece of the evening, the "laughable FARCE" of *The Purse* or *The Benevolent Tar* is to be remembered chiefly because in it a future favorite made her first bow to a St. Louis audience; this was Miss Mary Ann Russell, who twelve years later was to become, as Mrs. George P. Farren, the leading lady of the St. Louis Theatre.¹⁴

The second week was begun with *Hamlet*, which, of course, brought forward the actor-manager as "the melancholy Dane." The playbill announced the following cast:

¹⁴ Playbill in Harvard College Library Collection.

HAMLET

HAMLET (<i>Prince of Denmark</i>).....	MR. CALDWELL,
King Claudius.....	Sanford,
Laertes.....	Lear,
Horatio.....	Russell,
Rosencrantz.....	Hartwig,
Guildestern.....	Murray,
Polonius.....	Gray,
Ostrick [<i>sic</i>].....	Still,
Francisco.....	Lowry,
Ghost.....	Jackson,
Player King.....	Higgins,
2nd Grave-digger.....	McCafferty,
Ophelia (<i>her 2d appearance</i>).....	Miss Placide,
Queen.....	Mrs. Russell,
Player Queen.....	Johns,
Ladies, Jackson and Carpenter.	

After the tragedy, "got up by Mons. Tatin, Ballet Master and principal Dancer, a fancy Ballet, called LOVE IN DISGUISE, OR THE CAPRICIOUS WIDOW," Mrs. Higgins, Miss Russell, and Murray supporting M. Tatin. Other productions during the week were: *Paul Pry* (with Mr. and Mrs. Russell) followed by *Three and the Deuce* (Caldwell, the tragedian and "genteel comedian surprising all comers by his comic powers" in the "Three Singles"); the St. Louis *première* of *Rob Roy* (Caldwell and Mrs. Tatnall) and *The Spectre Bridegroom*; and Kotzebue's *Pizarro*, whether Sheridan's or Dunlap's version I cannot tell, but probably the former's, since a Ludlow and Smith prompt-copy in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society is his. Unfortunately the copy of the *Republican* for July 19 in the files of the society has been partly burned, and only a portion of the review of the performance of this ever popular thriller remains. This much is left:

. . . . We have never seen it better performed. We have, to be sure, witnessed Rolla presented in a superior manner—and never have we seen anything like Miss Placide, as Elvira. It was powerful, it was unrivalled performing. Her farewell and defiance to Pizarro, created intense feeling throughout the audience. The worship of the Sun, was also better performed than we have ever

witnessed. Mr. Still was, for once, in character. By the way, we will say to this gentleman, that without he memorizes his parts better than he has heretofore done, he can never please. The prompter's voice is heard too often, reminding him of words and sentences. We trust that ere the season has past, another opportunity may be afforded of seeing "Pizarro."—The farce [unidentified] was a poor apology, and the characters badly cast.

From "Spectator" in the other paper we learn that Jones played the title rôle, and played it well.

The most important feature of the third week was *Macbeth*. My guess is that Caldwell and Mrs. Tatnall enacted the guilty pair, but I have no way of confirming this surmise. In this connection it may be interesting to notice a sentence in Joe Cowell's autobiography. Of Mrs. Tatnall, the rather supercilious comedian has this to say:

Many years gone by, I strongly recommended her to Simpson [manager of the Park Theatre, New York] to play Lady Macbeth, and other would-be queens, with Cooper; he turned up his nose at my circus heroine then, but not long after she was a most successful *star* in such characters at all the principal theaters, and in many of them she was eminent.¹²

But, whether or not the lady displayed her powers on this particular occasion, we know that Macduff was in the hands of Jones, who moved at least one of the *Observer's* correspondents to epistolary encomium. ". . . In Macduff he displayed a correct and happy conception of the character, particularly in that pathetic scene, where Macduff is told of the melancholy fate of the beloved partner of his bosom and the dear pledges of mutual affection." Having disposed of the anguish of the noble Scot, Jones showed his versatility by playing Wildlove in *The Lady and the Devil*. This same week, according to the *Republican*, also saw *Tom and Jerry* and heard Miss Placide and Still in *The Devil's Bridge*, which preceded a repetition of *Three and the Deuce*.

On July 25 Caldwell played Charles Surface in *The School for Scandal*, which was followed by *The Review*. The next

¹² Cowell, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

night Mrs. Tatnall appeared as the Unknown Female and Caldwell as De Valmont in *The Foundling of the Forest*, and Still as Patrick in *The Poor Soldier*.¹³ There follows now a gap in my records till August 3 when, so says the *Republican*, *The Aethiop* and *'Tis All a Farce* were to be done. Of greater consequence was *Henry IV*, Part I, six evenings later. "Old Gray" was to be Falstaff—how he must have sweltered under the stuffing and padding of his costume!—and Caldwell, Hotspur. An added attraction, incredible as it may seem to us today, but common enough then, was to be the "*first appearance on any stage*" of "*a young gentleman of St. Louis*," to whom was to be intrusted the rôle of Westmoreland. In order that the tired business man might not overlook this delectable item, it was carefully italicized in the advertisement in the *Republican*. For full measure, *The Devil To Pay* was added. By this time the benefits had been begun, and for Mrs. Rowe's, on August 11, Caldwell played Doricourt and she herself Letitia in *The Belle's Stratagem*. The farce was *Honest Thieves*, "TEAGUE, BY AN AMATEUR, *Who has kindly consented to play on this occasion. In which character, he will introduce the admired Song, of THE SWEET LAND OF ERIN.*"¹⁴ There then ensued performances of *The Wonder*, with Caldwell and Mrs. Russell, and *Lock and Key*; *The Maid and the Magpie* and *The Forty Thieves*; and *Speed the Plough* and *The Liar*, Caldwell as Bob Handy and Young Wilding.¹⁵ According to the playbill which announced this last performance, the theatre was opened that evening in "compliance with the wishes of many Ladies and Gentlemen." The last bill in the Harvard Collection is confusing. At the top appears a notice to the effect that the

steam boat Essex not having yet arrived, the Theatre will be opened this evening, when will be presented, Beaumont and Fletcher's

¹³ *Mo. Rep.*, July 26, 1827.

¹⁴ Playbill in Harvard College Library Collection.

¹⁵ *The Wonder* and *Lock and Key* are announced in a playbill dated August 15, *Speed the Plough* and *The Liar* in another dated August 22; the other two were advertised in the *Republican* of August 16, 1827.

fashionable comedy of *Rule a Wife, and, Have a Wife*; to which will be added, for the second time, the splendid melo drama of the *Broken Sword*, with entire new Scenery, &c.

It then adds "THIS EVENING, Friday, August 23, 1827," with casts showing Caldwell in both plays. At the bottom of the sheet appear the words: "MISS RUSSELL'S BENEFIT, ON FRIDAY." Apparently the printer set up "Friday" when he meant "Thursday," and there was to be at least one more performance before the departure of the troupe on board the "Essex."

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Before St. Louis was again to taste the sweets of the drama, nearly an entire year was to pass. Not until July 19, so far as extant records disclose, was there offered for the delectation of the public anything more dramatic than the spectacle of an Egyptian mummy. On the evening of that day, however, the candles were re-lighted in the old salt house, and the theatre-loving citizens once more enjoyed the privilege of sweltering before the shrine of the Muses. The troupe whose efforts were to entertain them was a sort of offshoot of Caldwell's New Orleans Company. But the personnel was not by any means the same, nor can I think that it was by any means as competent. Caldwell himself had gone East on a starring-tour, and Mr. and Mrs. Russell had moved to Boston, where he was, for a brief and unhappy period, manager of the Tremont Street Theatre.¹⁶ The sole survivors from the players of the previous summer, at least from what I can determine, were Mr. and Mrs. Rowe, the husband serving as viceroy for his absent superior, the wife as leading lady. The others whose names I have been able to cull from the reviews were: Mr. and Mrs. Sol Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Lemuel Smith, William Anderson, William McCafferty, Mr. and Mrs. John Higgins, H. N. Barry, H. N. Cambridge, and a Mr. Palmer, first

¹⁶ Sol Smith, *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years*, p. 52; and Clapp, *Record of the Boston Stage*, pp. 282 and 290.

name unknown—not a very imposing array of talent. But the list does contain one name over which we cannot fail to pause. This is, of course, that of Sol Smith, a man who was for many years to command a high position, not only on the stage, but also in the community at large, where he was now for the first time making his appearance.

At this time Solomon S. Smith was but little past the threshold of his career as an actor, and, as we may conclude from the reviews, had probably not yet achieved that mastery of a difficult art which experience alone, in conjunction with native-born talent, can bestow. He was about twenty-seven years of age. The course of his life had coincided curiously with that of the man, six years his senior, who was to be for many years his partner, and with whom he was for nearly twenty years to occupy a very important position in the Western theatre. Like Ludlow, he was a native of New York state, though not of the city of that name. Like him he had had his first, though rather impromptu, stage experiences in John Bernard's theatre at Albany. He had also emigrated to the West, not however, like his future associate, as an actor. But the virus was in his blood, and the transition was easy from a Thespian Society in Cincinnati to what Ludlow was so fond of terming the "regular" stage. Here again, coincidence enters, for it was under the banner of the other's old commander, Sam Drake, that he first enlisted. This was in 1820 at Vincennes, Indiana, whither the itinerant players had wended their way from St. Louis. It was not difficult to determine what his forte was to be. Sol Smith apparently was born to be funny, and it was as a comedian that he was beloved up and down the Mississippi Valley for nearly half a century. For an account of his experiences during these and subsequent years, the reader is referred to his *Theatrical Management*, or, if copies can be found, to his other collections of stage-anecdotes.¹⁷ This is but our first meeting with

¹⁷ *Theatrical Apprenticeship* and *Theatrical Journeywork*. The books coincide to a great degree.

the genial gentleman whose name will, ere long, appear on nearly every page of this treatise.

Before taking up the reports of the season published in the current newspapers, I shall repeat Smith's account of it as he gives it in the volume alluded to above.

. . . I made my first appearance in the character of *Kit Cosey* (TOWN AND COUNTRY), and was warmly received by the audience. Our theatre was an old salt-house in Second Street, mentioned as having been fitted up for dramatic purposes by Mr. Caldwell the year before, and was generally well attended. . . . The management was placed in the hands of Mr. James S. Rowe, the treasurer of the establishment, and the season was a paying one. The comedy of the HYPOCRITE was acted a great number of nights, Mr. Barry performing the character of *Dr. Cantwell*, and the writer of this that of *Mr. Mawworm*. . . . The drama of the GAMBLER'S FATE was produced this season with great success, and I think with considerable moral effect. Those [he concludes] were jolly times in St. Louis!¹⁸

One wonders if there was any connection between the last two sentences.

For contemporary views upon the ensuing events, I am dependent upon the *Republican*, but it serves me well, and its pages call up before my gaze some strange pictures of the fearful and wonderful things that went on that summer in the erstwhile "temporary warehouse." The first notice, an editorial printed July 22, three days after the initial performance, was decorous enough. It merely stated that the Theatre had opened on the preceding Saturday "under the management of Mr. Rowe, with the Play of 'Town and Country,'" welcomed Mrs. Rowe, and ventured to hope that the season might not "operate to the injury of the manager, in a pecuniary point of view." The same issue displayed an advertisement for the next evening's bill, Cherry's comedy, *The Soldier's Daughter*, with Lem Smith, younger brother of Sol, as Frank Heartall, Anderson as Governor Heartall, Sol Smith as Timothy Quaint, Mrs. Rowe as the Widow Cheerly, and Mrs. L. Smith as Mrs. Malfort; and "the new and popular

¹⁸ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

farce of *The One Hundred Pound Note*" with McCafferty and Mrs. Rowe, the latter as Miss Arlington "with the original *Bavarian Girl's Broom Song*." Days of performance were announced as Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

The season continued until about the middle of October, and, whatever may have been the deficiencies in production, was certainly, so far as the repertoire was considered, a really excellent one. Despite Sol Smith's enthusiasm for *The Hypocrite* and the very moral *Gambler's Fate*, the most important single item was probably the performance of *The Merchant of Venice* (September 10), except for the pseudo-historical *Henry IV*, the first Shakespearean comedy to be presented in St. Louis. The make-up of the cast is not without interest. Anderson played Shylock; Lem Smith, Gratiano; Barry, Bassanio; Mrs. Rowe, Portia; Mrs. Lem Smith, Nerissa; and Mrs. Sol Smith, Jessica, probably because of an incidental song. It is to be regretted that we have no review of this production. After the comedy, one Mrs. Kenny danced "a fancy pas seul" (at least I presume she did; she was supposed to), and the popular farce of *The Liar* was used to send the auditors home satisfied that they had had their money's worth. *The Merchant of Venice* was the only novelty of any notable consequence, unless we wish to include Banim's *Damon and Pythias*, but there were repetitions of a number of plays which enjoyed popularity at that time, though with the change in theatrical tastes most of them have today been consigned to the limbo of cast-off favorites. In this category we cannot, of course, place *Othello*, which was staged about September 1, nor Sheridan's *The Critic*. But there I think I am safe in putting *Ali Baba or The Forty Thieves*, Holcroft's *The Road to Ruin*, *The Will*, *The Review*, *Guy Mannering*, *John Bull*, and the ever thrilling *Pizarro*. I shall now follow the issues of the faithful *Republican* for enlightenment upon the character of the productions and the talents of the players. Let us see what it reports; and let us thank the "communicants" for their frankness.



THE FIRST MRS. SOL SMITH

(From a daguerreotype in the possession of Mr. Sheridan S. Smith)

On July 30, we are informed, the visitors were to present two plays new to St. Louis, the melodrama of *The Forest of Rosenwald* or *The Travellers Benighted* and the farce of *Simpson & Co.*, and between them Mr. S. Smith was to oblige with a comic song pleasantly called "The Great Booby." Then on August 5, the editor, after apologizing for his failure to notice the company sooner and deploring the failure of the public to encourage its efforts, launches forth upon an extended criticism, on the whole fairly favorable, which he concludes with the assertion that the poor attendance has probably been due to "the uncommon warmth of the weather."

In the same paper we find a long communication which also reveals something of the qualities of the individual players, and from it I shall quote some significant passages.

MR. L. SMITH.—This gentleman's *forte* is light comedy; and were it not for an *intolerable* habit he is possessed with, of scarcely ever being perfect, would be tolerable. To remedy this disagreeable evil, he is often driven to the necessity of drawing upon his own mental resources, which, from causes unknown to us, develop themselves in such a confused and tautological manner, as to present but one unmeaning surface, not unlike the very pond in which he wished "himself up to the neck," some few evenings ago. Now, if *we* have an aversion in the world, it is to hear an actor using localities (which the author never dreamt of) in consequence of not knowing, or having forgot what the author really did say.

Mr. S. Smith, in low comedy, is a source of considerable mirth to the laughter-loving portion of the audience, and he is well spoken of by the more reflecting and discerning as possessing many of those qualifications which constitute a low comedian. Lest, however, Mr. S. should suppose he is an actor, "take him all in all," we would suggest that he not again "o'erstep the modesty of nature"—as was the case in the character of Ali Baba, in the *Forty Thieves*—but "speak no more than is set down for him, for though it make the unskilful laugh, it cannot but make the judicious grieve." We would also prefer, that Mr. S. S. would more frequently consult the *property-man*, in order that when he next personated the father of two boys, he may have the appearance of, *at least*, looking as *old* as his sons. It is well to have these things

correct, though only a scanty portion of the audience is capable of knowing, or disposed to care whether they are correct or not. . . .

Mrs. L. Smith is not only new to our boards, but, we are informed, new to the stage. Of this lady we certainly may speak favorably. She possesses many requisites for the profession, and her *personal* qualifications are fine. There is in some degree a lack of correct gesture, and a too frequent use of the same (left) hand. These, however, are trifling imperfections, which her perfections far outweigh, and which, she is no doubt capable of correcting.

Mrs. S. Smith, a pleasing singer, and an actress of much talent. She is also a stranger to us, but her desire to please, combined with a modest and unpretending indescribable something in her manner will, we feel assured, gain her many admirers.

This communication concludes with the expression of the hope that the manager may not be disappointed, despite the unpropitious season, and that he "may be enabled speedily to realize his most splendid views in relation to this place," and is signed "THESPIS & CO."

These critical comments are not particularly reassuring as to the quality of the acting then on exhibition in the old salt house; hence it is perhaps not to be wondered at that the public came to look with greatest favor upon the melodramas, whatever may have been their artistic shortcomings, which displayed the elaborate scenic effects evolved by the gifted Mr. McCafferty. During the month of August two of these were staged with such success that they were repeated immediately. The first was *Zemluca* or *The Net Maker and His Wife*; the second, John Howard Payne's *Therese, the Orphan of Geneva*, both with new scenery. The production of the former was warmly commended in the *Republican* (August 12), the editor remarking that it "has been got up in decidedly the best style of any piece this season," and he adds that "the plaudits of a numerous audience manifested their admiration of the performance. As long as the worthy Manager shall bring forward such entertainments, he cannot fail to command good houses." The next week, *Therese* held the boards, like its predecessor, at least twice, I presume, with

equal éclat. The popularity of this inferior type of drama elicited on August 26 a letter from "The Pit," which included further observations not exactly flattering to the theatre-going public of the city. He says:

We grant that a majority of an audience are not overscrupulous as to what is served up to them; and that that which requires the least mental exertion, and pleases the visual organs, is certain of commendation from them. Consequently the excellence of this species of plays is made to depend, almost entirely, for effect, upon scenic illusion—the richness and variety of costume—and the paraphernalia, "pomp and circumstance," which are said to distinguish Eastern courts; and the act of the painter is held in constant requisition to give effect to scenes in themselves dull and spiritless.

But, he decides sadly that it is "a silly thing to wage war with Fashion, however absurd," and consoles himself with the thought that these actors do better in pieces of that sort than in any other. McCafferty is, he concedes, an "invaluable acquisition." The writer does, however, admonish this accomplished gentleman that he would do well to paint a street-scene.

For, although it may be no great draft upon our imagination to conceive that the streets of a populous, close-built city (London, for instance) may be dark and cheerless; we do think, that they should not be located in an impenetrable forest, through which no beam of the sun can be supposed to find its way. We can conceive of a city "set upon a hill," but we are not willing to allow the propriety of its being placed in an impervious wood.

There is here neither time nor space to repeat in full his rather caustic strictures upon the individual performers. Suffice it to say that he finds Anderson, S. Smith, Barry, and McCafferty respectable, although the first-named reminds him "sadly of a tempest in a tea-pot," and S. Smith interpolates objectionably. He then gives the usual praise of Mrs. Rowe, Mrs. L. Smith (as Charlotte in *The Hypocrite*), and Mrs. Higgins "as superannuated dowagers, termagants,

prudes, & &." After dismissing Messrs. Palmer and Cambridge as beyond all hope, he observes that Mr. and Mrs. L. Smith "are well enough in the natural relations of man and wife," but that as parent and child in *Therese* they left much to be desired since "it is absolutely necessary, in all cases, that the mother should look older than the son."

If Rowe was ignorant of the shortcomings of his company, it must have been because he did not read the *Republican*. Certainly he did not lack advice. The same issue which printed the comments of "The Pit," gave space to a briefer but no less informative communication signed "QUEREDO."

A FEW HINTS TO THE THEATRICAL COMPANY OF ST. LOUIS

The persons who have charge of the *lightning* should not show themselves on the stage while in the exercise of their duty, and those who "wield the *thunder*" should be more moderate in their claps, and let some of the words of the play be heard. The *Prior* and *Monks* in *Bertram*, should keep their countenances, and *Dennis Bulgrudery* should study his words. It would not be amiss if *Ashfield*, *Frank Rochdale*, *Job Thornbery* [*sic*], *Sir Simon*, *Korac*, and several of the characters, were somewhat more as the author wrote them. *Zembuca's* slaves should get their shirts washed. *Cubba* should use *lamp black* instead of *Crape* [*sic*]. *William Tell* ought to study his part. *Albert* should speak louder. *Carwin* and *Fontaine* should employ a tailor. To represent a street in London, a *grove scene* should not be used. *Don Alphonso* should not wear a scimitar. *Lambert* should wear a wig. *Philistius* should have a throne—so should *Gesler* [*sic*]. *Ardinelle* should be provided with a grotto, and a silver lake to glide on. *Ali Baba* ought to have a donkey to carry his wood, and *Ganem* should study music. Anderson should not attempt to play light comedy—S. Smith tragedy—Palmer, low comedy—Mrs. Smiths [*sic*] old women—Mr. Barry, old men. Mrs. Rowe should *play* oftener—Mrs. S. Smith should *sing* oftener—Mrs. Kenny should *dance* oftener, and the Theatre should not be open so often. A few more people in the boxes, pit and gallery, would not be amiss as it cannot be expected that the actors, with all their little faults, can live, like cameleons [*sic*] on air. More anon.

The last item we find for August is a repetition of *Zembuca* with a "first-time" 'Twas I or *The Truth a Lie*, by John Howard Payne. As Georgette in the latter piece, Mrs. Rowe was to sing "Bid Me Discourse" and "When a Lover Kneels before Her" from the popular romantic opera of *Der Freyschütz*. And, during the first act of the melodrama, Mrs. Kenny was to dance a Turkish *pas seul*. On September 3, the citizens were morally edified by *The Gambler's Fate* or *A Lapse of Twenty Years*. Sol Smith was not its only admirer; on the day before the performance the newspaper printed a "communication" signed "One who has seen and read it" which, after discoursing on the banality of melodrama in general, highly praised this particular play, not only for its "superior merit as a dramatic composition, but on account of its utility." The correspondent points out that it is an adaptation of *The Gamester*. The importance of the occasion was stressed in Rowe's advertisement, which asserts that the play "has been some time in preparation." Anderson and Barry were to appear as Germaine and Malcour, respectively, and Mrs. Rowe as Julia. *The Spoiled Child* with Mrs. Rowe as Little Pickle was to serve as the curtain-raiser, in which she was to sing and also to dance a sailor's hornpipe "dressed in character"! Small wonder that the patrons of the drama were impressed by her versatility! For good measure, Mrs. S. Smith was to sing, between the pieces "the celebrated Swiss Cantata of WILLIAM TELL."

In the same paper the editor continued with what his correspondent modestly termed "a few hints to the performers." I too shall go on with them.

The Orchestra should play some National tunes and popular airs between the pieces and acts. *Zembuca's* principal guard should not leave his post to carry off chairs and tables at Ebra's cottage. Selim should wear mustachios and a turban. S. Smith should stick to his comic songs, and leave "Love has Eyes" to his wife and Mrs. Rowe. L. Smith should not be cast for old Lord Mayors. The people behind the scenes should not talk so loud. Mrs. Higgins should not

attempt to play young women. Wood-wings should not be used for chamber scenes. When a request is made by several respectable gentlemen to see a performer in a particular part, it might be well to indulge them, and not advertise the piece requested with *another* performer cast for the part. Pieces should not be repeated too often. Walker's Dictionary should be consulted by several of the actors. Tragedies should be avoided during the warm weather.—The Duke of Venice should send out his sergeant-at-arms to compel the attendance of a few more Senators; *three*, we should suppose, would scarcely be a quorum. The Senate table ought to be a little more than two feet square—it should be furnished with a better table cloth and one more candle at least. Roderigo should study his part. Othello, as commander general of the Venician [*sic*] forces at Cyprus, ought to be able, out of his pay, to furnish his wife's bed-chamber a little better. Amelia [*sic*] ought to have a couch or a carpet to die on. To represent streets in Venice and Cyprus, the *same* wood scene should not be used—nor should the same scene be used to represent the Ducal palace at Venice and Desdemona's bedchamber at Cyprus. Palmer should not be so comical in tragedy, nor Cambridge so tragical in comedy. Mrs. S. Smith should not at all times be poised on the tips of her toes. More anon.

QUEREDO.

By this time (September 10) we have come to the inevitable benefits, the first being Anderson's, *The Merchant of Venice*, to which I have already adverted. For hers (September 17) Mrs. Rowe selected *The Will* so that she might shine as Albina. In spite of published aspersions on his voice, McCafferty was prepared to sing "a new comic song, called a HIT AT THE LAW," and with Mr. Kenny a comic "duett." "The evening's entertainment to conclude with the highly interesting and pathetic Melo Drama, of the FALLS OF CLYDE. Ellen Enfield, Mrs. Rowe," and a Scotch *pas seul* by Mrs. Kenny. "Performance to commence precisely at half past seven o'clock." Two days later Mr. and Mrs. L. Smith profferred for their benefit *The Wandering Boys* or *The Castle of Olival* followed by the burletta of *Tom and Jerry*.

Naturally, when his night came along, McCafferty stressed the scenery, and, as we may see by his card, many good things were in store for theatrically minded St. Louisans.

THEATRE.

LAST NIGHT BUT ONE.

MR. McCAFFERTY'S BENEFIT, SCENE PAINTER TO THE THEATRE.

MR. McCAFFERTY, respectfully announces to the Ladies and Gentlemen of St. Louis, that he has prepared for representation, in a style of unparalleled merit before witnessed here, for his BENEFIT, which takes place

ON SATURDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1828,
THE HISTORICAL MELLO DRAMA OF THE

SNOW STORM; OR, THE EXILE OF SIBERIA.

Rumstohf,	Mr. L. Smith,	Yermila,	Mr. Keay,
Brandt,	Anderson,	Orskoff,	Palmer,
Mitchell,	Capandage,	His Highness, and Polwitz,	S. Smith,
PETERHOFF,	McCafferty,	General,	Palmer,
Governor,	Barry,	Uvinski,	Higgins,
Count Ostroff, (at appearance this evening)	Murray,	Louise,	Mrs. Rowe,
Brownbrock,	Barry,	Laudiano,	Higgins,

Among the **NEW SCENERY**, is the following:

A view of **BAUSFAU**, with the **FLANK INN**, and **GUARD HOUSE**, ALL COVERED WITH SNOW.
INTERIOR OF A **RUSSIAN COTTAGE**. During this scene, **PETERHOFF** sings to a **SLEDGE**, drawn by a **DEER**.

THE **DESERT OF SIBERIA**. During this scene, a **correct representation of a SNOW STORM**.
THE **CITY OF NETTESCHINSK**, the buildings covered with SNOW.

BRIDGE AND POST HOUSE.

After the **Main Drive**, will be shown, (passed expressly for the occasion)

A NEW STREET SCENE.

From each place, the following songs, &c.

Comoe Duett, "**RIVAL BEAUTIES**," by Mr. **KEAY**, and Mr. **McCAFFERTY**.
Comic Song "**KNOWING JOE**, OR, **FLOODGATEMAN TURNED ACTOR**," by Mr. **SMITH**.
SONG, "**TRAMP OF VICTORY**," by Mr. **S. SMITH**.
Comic Song, "**A HIT AT THE FASHIONS**," by Mr. **McCAFFERTY**.

The whole to conclude with the magnificent Piece of the

Spectra Bridgroom; Or, A Ghost in Spite of Himself.

Mr. Neudeman,	Mr. Barry,	Paul,	Mr. Keay,
Quare Aldenkis,	McCafferty,	Governant,	Palmer,
Dickory,	S. Smith,	Man Georgiana,	Mrs. D. Smith,
Capt. Vanstington,	E. Smith,	Loring,	L. Smith,

by **MR. BARRY'S BENEFIT, ON MONDAY.**

PLAYBILL ADVERTISING McCafferty's Benefit in the Salt House in 1828, IN THE POSSESSION OF THE MISSISSIPPI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MR. McCAFFERTY'S NIGHT

MR. McCAFFERTY respectfully informs the ladies and gentlemen of St. Louis, that his Benefit will take place ON SATURDAY EVENING, the 20th inst. for which occasion he has prepared the admired and interesting Melo Drama of the SNOW STORM; or *The Exile of Siberia*, with entirely new and splendid Snow scenery—Consisting of a view of Radstad, with the River, Flask Ink, and Guard House—the exterior of a Russian cottage—a view of the Village and Bridge of Nertschniks—the desert Rocks of Siberia—and the Post house with the Bridge across the Wolga. Also, a NEW STREET SCENE, with other entertainments. To conclude with the laughable farce of the SPECTRE BRIDEGROOM, or a *Ghost in Spite of Himself*. And humbly trusts, that this selection will meet with their approbation and support.

The reader may recall that, writing in the *Republican* of August 5, "Thespis & Co." had referred to Caldwell's "most splendid views in relation to this place." What those views were, we learn from the same publication on September 16. In an editorial headed "New Theatre," the publisher, after extolling the stage as "next to the Pulpit, the most powerful corrector of vice and the greatest incentive to acts of virtue" and defending his rather severe criticisms of the performances, states that "it has been a source of gratification to us to witness the gradual but steady progress it [the Drama] has made in the favor of the public." He goes on to express the hope that this feeling may not "recede" but may "continue to advance until its final permanent establishment shall be accomplished." To this end, he observes, St. Louis must have a theatre building that will be more than an inconvenient makeshift. He then goes on to say that

our hopes in this respect seem likely to be realized much sooner than we anticipated. Within these few days, we have seen a prospectus by Mr. James H. Caldwell, Manager of the New Orleans, Natchez, Nashville and St. Louis Theatres, for the immediate construction of an edifice sufficiently commodious for all present purposes. The proposed structure is calculated to contain, without inconvenience, six hundred persons—and will have a front of fifty-three feet, extending one hundred back. . . . Without going into

minute details of the plan it may be sufficient to say, that the expense of the building is estimated at \$15,000; which sum it is proposed to raise by shares of \$100 each. Mr. Caldwell with a commendable liberality, offers to take seventy-five shares, leaving the other half to be subscribed for by the citizens. A part of these have already been taken, and we cannot but believe, that the liberal, moneyed men in the community will avail themselves of an opportunity for investing a small portion of their capital in a manner which promises to be advantageous to themselves and, as we think, to society.

The new structure was to be erected immediately on the site of the one then in use. Whether, however, "the liberal, moneyed men" failed to embrace the opportunity thus proffered them or Caldwell himself changed his mind, I do not know. But I do know that the ambitious project, like its predecessor a decade before, fell through, and that for nearly ten years more the much maligned old salt house continued to do duty as a temple of the arts.

The remainder of the summer season of 1828 need detain us but a moment longer. On September 23, Barry had his benefit, *Pizarro*, with the beneficiary appearing for the first time as Rolla, and the beloved Mrs. Rowe declaiming the defiance of Elvira; it was followed by the "petit comedy" of *A Day after the Wedding* or *A Wife's First Lesson* with the same two principals. This bill had evidently been delayed because of the weather, for the advertisement states that there will be "no further Postponement" on that account. Within a few days, though just when or with what plays I cannot report, the summer season came to a close.

On October 1, the theatre was reopened for a fall season, but fortune no longer smiled upon the enterprise. The first bill, according to the advertisement of September 30, was composed of Reynold's *The Exile* and Sheridan's *The Critic*. In the former, the following performers were to be seen: Anderson (Daran), Mrs. L. Smith (Alexina), Mrs. Rowe (Catherine), and Mrs. S. Smith (the Empress Elizabeth). No cast is given for the satire. McCafferty's skill as a manipulator of

snowstorms was once more to be called into service, and Mrs. Kenny was to execute another "fancy *pas seul*" doubtless this time Russian in nationality. A week later, *Wanted a Wife* and *The Young Widow* were advertised, and *The Road to Ruin* was promised for the following Thursday *in compliment to the Jockey Club!* But, as I said, the season was not a success, and on October 14 it came to an end with Mrs. Rowe's second benefit, "the Grand Melo Dramatic Opera of GUY MANNERING, or a *Gipsy's Prophecy*, Dramatised from Walter Scott's popular novel of that name. Meg Merrilies, Mrs. Rowe. During the opera, a variety of Songs, Duetts, & c. by Mr. and Mrs. S. Smith. After which, first time here, Moncrieff's new and unrivalled Drama, entitled *THE SOMNAMBULIST.*" The cast of the latter was to include L. Smith (Rosambert), McCafferty (Colin de Trop), Mrs. Rowe (Ernestine), and Mrs. L. Smith (Madame Gertrude). For an explanation of the failure, I turn to the ever ready *Republican*, the edition of which again displays discrimination and frankness.

The Theatre, since its reopening, has been but thinly attended; and a proportionate want of spirit is discoverable in the performers. We can only satisfactorily account for the badness of the houses by considering, that the amusement has now been kept up for nearly three months, and those who have the strongest penchant for such exhibitions, have become sated with them. An expectation has also been entertained, that with the commencement of the new season, we were to be indulged with the sight of some new faces; and this, no doubt, deterred many from attending. The hopes of the Manager, and of ourselves, in this respect, have thus far been disappointed; and it is now a matter of doubt, whether any of the "promised good things" will be given to us.¹⁹

This has been a long session with the critics, but I have felt that in no other way could we get so good a picture of the current theatricals as by viewing them through the eyes of their contemporaries. Those who actually participated themselves can scarcely be expected to have the proper perspec-

¹⁹ *Mo. Rep.*, October 7, 1828.

tive, especially setting down the recollections years after the events described. These analyses of the merits and demerits of the players and the productions cause one to suspect that, possibly, the St. Louis audiences had other reasons than the inevitable summer heat (that could not interfere in October) and satiety, for leaving the boxes, pit, and gallery of the old salt house bare.

CHAPTER VII

THE STARS COME OUT, 1829-31

WE WILL not be detained long by 1829. Except for one oasis in the month of June, it presents a barren stretch. St. Louis was paying for its failure to appreciate the efforts of the Caldwell emissaries of the preceding year, and the old salt house languished, neglected, in idleness. For the one bright spot, we must seek, except on two evenings, in a new quarter—in an amphitheatre adjoining the Missouri Hotel.

On June 2, we find J. Purdy Brown, a familiar figure in the stage history of the South, advertising for that evening and "a limited period" the performances of his equestrian troupe. The phrasing of the notice leads one to think that Brown had himself erected the amphitheatre especially for the occasion. "The amphitheatre," he informs the ladies and gentlemen of St. Louis, "is calculated for extensive public accomodation, and will be open every night this week." Interesting, however, as the gyrations of his horses and the skill of their riders may have been, it is not they who attract our attention. We find that the zealous manager, with an eye to pleasing all tastes, had effected a combination of entertainments which, to drama-lovers of the twentieth century, must seem somewhat incongruous. Let us see what he says:

. . . . In order that a combination of attraction [*sic*] may be brought forward, the proprietor has the pleasure to announce, that besides the talents of his extensive and well organized Equestrian troop, and much admired stud of highly trained horses, he has at considerable expense effected an engagement with the juvenile dramatic prodigy, MISS LANE, also with Mr. and Mrs. Kinloch, all from the London and New York Theatres.

So, as it were, among the horses, St. Louis saw for the first time members of a famous theatrical family, whose scions

down to the fourth generation were destined to be favorites with the playgoing inhabitants. "Miss Lane," the first of the infant prodigies to disport themselves on the stage (or, in this case, the sawdust) of the city, was Louisa Lane, later as Mrs. John Drew one of the most important and revered personages of the American theatre. She was at this time but nine years of age,¹ traveling with her mother and stepfather, the Kinlochs. Yet, in spite of her tender years, she had already been seen at the Bowery Theatre in New York,² at Albany,³ and elsewhere, and was becoming quite a favorite. Her part in the proceedings of the evening of June 2 (second night of performance) was to enact Dr. Pangloss in a scene from *The Heir at Law* plus six characters in the farce *Actress of All Work*, Kinloch playing the manager! Mrs. Kinloch was to sing two "favorite songs."

So great was the success of the child-actress that, not only was a local rimester moved to address her in verse,⁴ but, according to an advertisement in the *Republican* of June 16, so many ladies and gentlemen expressed a desire to see her perform in the Theatre that arrangements were made for two appearances there. To make these, she must have had to sever, for the time being at least, her connection with the equestrian corps. The *Beacon*, the Jackson paper of which Charles Keemle was the editor and part-owner, declared editorially on June 13 that "Mr. Brown, and his equestrian company, will leave here tomorrow in the Essex—this evening positively the last performance. They have exhibited in this place the last two weeks, and have had crowded houses, almost every night." The same number of the paper contains also the following notice: "Miss Lane, having been seriously indisposed, is now convalescent, and will appear next week."

¹ According to Allston Brown, she was born in 1818, but both Wemyss (*Chronology of the American Stage*) and Phelps (*Players of a Century*) give the date as 1820.

² Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, III, 322.

³ H. P. Phelps, *Players of a Century*, p. 116.

⁴ *Mo. Rep.*, June 9, 1829.

On Saturday, June 20, the same paper announces that she will give her first performance (I presume that this means her first in the Theatre) on Monday instead of on Saturday as announced in the *Republican*. On that occasion she was to repeat her characterizations in *The Heir at Law* and *Actress of All Work*; and the Kinlochs were to sing ballads and comic songs. The evening's entertainment was to conclude with the new farce entitled *12 Precisely* or *A Night at Dover* with the appended cast:

Sir Ferdinand Frisky	Mrs. Kinloch
Brass	Mr. Kinloch
Amelia Wildlove	Miss Lane
Katy O'Carroll	Miss Lane
Marchioness Grenoiulle	Miss Lane
Captain Wildlove	Miss Lane
Marquis Grenoiulle	Miss Lane

For her second appearance in the salt house, she was to repeat her endeavors in *12 Precisely*, liberally sprinkled with songs, and to interpret, further, the Four Mowbrays, in the farce *Old and Young*.

All this by a child of nine! The vogue of such performances is another phase of nineteenth-century theatricals which, I think, we today are incapable of comprehending. Yet it was undoubtedly great. Little Louisa Lane was but the first to cavort on the St. Louis stage. The way was now clear for Master Burke and Miss Meadows. But sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Fortunately, 1830 proves of considerably greater interest than its immediate predecessor. The first six of its twelve months brought St. Louisans little theatrical diversion, so far as I have been able to discover only a single charity performance of *The Jew* and *The Irish Tutor* by the Thespians,⁵ but the latter half of the year was by no means barren. Once more, we find, somewhat to our surprise perhaps, the regular season opening with the coming of summer. Yet this fact

⁵ *St. Louis Beacon*, February 6, 1830.

only marks a characteristic of the St. Louis stage which has endured for more than a century. Despite its reputation for extreme heat, St. Louis has been almost throughout its entire stage history a summer theatrical center. We have seen now for several years the players waiting till June to take up their activities; before long we shall find the custom firmly established, even after the erection of a real "temple of the drama." In the closing years of the last century and the first of the present there flourished summer gardens with excellent stock companies in whose ranks were artists with national reputations. And today as I write these lines in the summer of 1929, the great Municipal Theatre and the more intimate Garden Theatre, both *al fresco*, are nightly drawing between ten and twelve thousand playgoers to enjoy light operas and musical comedies presented by some of the ablest talent of its kind on the American stage.

The 1830 season, which opened June 12 with *She Stoops To Conquer*, was important for a particular reason. It witnessed an innovation of the greatest consequence, the introduction into the St. Louis theatre of the starring-system which, in one form or another, for better or for worse, has dominated the American stage down to the present time. True, the term "star" had not yet reached this western community, but the fact was none the less the same. Three players not, nominally at least, members of the company were brought to town for special engagements. On June 3, the *Beacon* published a notice to the effect that Messrs. Gray and Rowe had arranged with Caldwell for the use of the St. Louis and Nashville Theatres, and that the former would be opened the next week. The "Card" went on to speak of the excellence of the company assembled and of the expense and pains to which the managers were prepared to go in order to mount their pieces splendidly. These managers were, of course, Jackson Gray, whom we have met before only as an actor, chiefly of old men, and James S. Rowe, who had been Caldwell's treasurer. The three stars announced were Miss

Placide, for eight appearances; Caldwell himself, for five; and Charles Parsons, the tragedian, for three. But they were not to be the only attractions. Advertising again in the *Beacon*, June 10, Gray and Rowe announced that they had employed "MR. MONDELLI, an Italian Artist of considerable eminence, whose productions have been the admiration of all connoisseurs who have witnessed the effect of his pencil, both in the scenic art, and in the splendid and tasteful decorations of the American Theatre, in New Orleans," who has "tastefully decorated the interior of the House in a style of splendor never before witnessed here." The editor expresses the belief that, thanks to Mondelli's decorations, the managers will be enabled to "give better satisfaction than was given by Mr. Caldwell." The company was in personnel, if not for the time being in law, largely Caldwell's, but most of the members were new to St. Louis. It included several individuals who were in later years to achieve prominence in the theatrical world. One was John Gilbert, who was then, at the age of twenty, on the threshold of one of the longest and most honorable careers on the American stage of the nineteenth century, and who was to be for years beloved as perhaps the finest interpreter in his day of such rôles as Sir Peter Teazle, Old Hardcastle, and Old Dornton. Another was Mrs. McClure, formerly Mary Ann Meek, who shortly after became identified with the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia. I find named in the casts too a "Mr. Fenno." According to Wemyss, William Augustus Fenno "made his first appearance on the American Stage in 1831, at the Bowery Theatre, in New York,"⁶ but, the name is certainly a rare one, and I suspect that this is he; if so, he was, according to Wemyss, but sixteen years of age. Perhaps of greatest local importance, however, was Joseph M. Field, whom we find in the juvenile leads. His is a name which, however little known abroad, must loom large in any history of the St. Louis stage. He was by birth an Englishman, although born in Dublin, but

⁶ Wemyss, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

had been brought to this country as a child of two; he was at the time of his St. Louis *début* twenty years of age. Besides his histrionic talent, he had some gifts as a writer, his farce *Family Ties* winning a \$1,000 prize offered by Dan Marble, and *Gabrielle*, a translation from the French, serving later as a vehicle for Charlotte Cushman.⁷

The season got under way June 10 with *She Stoops To Conquer*: Sir Charles Marlow, Gilbert; Old Hardcastle, Clarke; Young Marlow, Field; Hastings, McClure; Jeremy, Morton; Landlord, Lewis; Tony Lumpkin, Hernizen; Diggory, Gray; Miss Hardcastle, Mrs. McClure; Miss Neville, Miss Clarke; Mrs. Hardcastle, Mrs. Gray. The comedy was followed by the farce of *The Hotel or Two Strings to Your Bow* played by Clarke, Gilbert, Morton, Field, Hernizen, Gray, Fenno, Lewis, Mrs. McClure, Miss Clarke, and Mrs. Gray. Of this performance a writer in the *Republican* of June 15 speaks favorably, although he thought that he "discovered, in various efforts to give effect to particular passages, evidences of 'false reading,' which, as they did not 'shadow forth' the meaning of the author, ought not to have been attempted." His further comments may be of interest.

The tones of the voice were, in general, exerted too much, for the compass of the house. And we would suggest to those whose duty it is to attend to the matter, a little more discrimination in omitting parts not intended for representation; a "concatenation of circumstances" sufficiently strong to enable the audience to understand the plot of the piece, should, at least, be preserved.

Adrian and Orilla, two days later, served to present the first star, Miss Placide, and *The Spoiled Child*, apparently the popular Mrs. Rowe. A long "communication" in the *Republican* of June 22 throws some light on the acting.

Miss Placide's performance of Madame Clermont may . . . be characterized, as at once chaste and powerful. In the wildest bursts of passion, her enunciation was distinct, her attitudes correct

⁷ Lillian Whiting, *Kate Field, a Record*. His daughter, the subject of this biography, later became a figure of some consequence in this country.

and her conception of the force and meaning of each word, nicely accurate. She merits to be placed much in advance of the other members of the company.

Field appeared as Adrian, and, according to the *Beacon* (June 17) to good advantage. "To a fine expression of countenance, and a good general appearance, he adds a good deal of spirit, some taste, and a pretty correct conception of his part." The writer in the *Republican* apparently did not share Keemle's enthusiasm for Old Gray and he expresses the wish that "he had not seen Mr. Gray in the character of the Count, Orilla's father. He is not suited to such a part, he is without grace or dignity—without, indeed, a proper conception of the character." Of one Langton who played Altenburg he says: "His action is not good; his delivery without euphony, and the occasional see-sawing of his body, very disagreeable." Field, he says, was better and the subordinate characters "well enough," but "The Farce of the Spoiled Child, was completely spoiled." The following evening, Miss Placide's second night, brought forth *Wives as They Were, and Maids as They Are* and, for the afterpiece, *The Young Widow*, with Hernizen singing "The Poachers," in between. The next bill of which I have found any record (played June 18) was composed of *George Barnwell* and *The Lottery Ticket*. I judge from the subjoined comments by the *Republican's* critical correspondent that it left something to be desired.

The less said of the play [as distinguished from the farce], the better. Mr. Langton performed *Barnwell* and shed bountiful floods of tears on the occasion. Indeed, a damask white napkin which he applied ever and anon to his face, seemed to have a wonderful effect in bringing forth the briny fluid; he was, withal, prodigal of his ohs and ahs, his lachrymose sighs and hysterical interjections. *Barnwell* reminded me of an old author, who at a time when great diversity of opinion prevailed as to the proper mode of punctuation, omitted the points altogether in the body of his work and affixed several solid pages of these necessary appendages to correct reading, at the end of the volume—so that they might be used according to the fancy of each particular reader. Thus it was, in some

sort, with Barnwell. When fairly entered upon one of his long passages, he would forget to make the necessary pauses, or place them improperly and when he had finished, nothing presented itself to the mind's eye but a confused recollection of "words, mere words."—Millwood, [Mrs. McClure] in some scenes, was very well sustained. The same may be said of the other characters [Field, Clarke, Gilbert, Hernizen, Lewis, Harrison, Miss Clarke, and Mrs. Gray]. But as a whole it was a spiritless and vapid representation. The Farce went off better than most farces do. Miss Clark [*sic*] as Susan, was quite at home; and I am inclined to join the audience in bestowing upon her much praise.

The same critic dismisses *The Gambler's Fate* with Miss Placide as Julia, on the following evening, with faint praise, and says he dislikes farces too much to bother with *The Promissory Note*. June 23 a distinct novelty was offered in *A Lear of Private Life*, a highly emotional drama based on Mrs. Opie's novel, *Father and Daughter*, the performance being the fifth of Miss Placide's engagement. The afterpiece was *Love in Wrinkles*. Apparently *The Gambler's Fate!!!* (in the advertisements the name is always followed by three exclamation points) found popular favor again this season, for it was repeated on June 25 for Miss Placide's sixth evening, with the following cast: Albert Germaine, Field; Malcour, Langton; Old Germaine, Clarke; Dumont, Gilbert; Bertrand, Morton; D'Estere, Fenno; Everard and Lindorf, McClure; Richard and Rose, Emily Clarke; Martin, Hernizen; Julia, Miss Placide; Madame Belcour and Henry Germaine, Mrs. McClure; Baalamb, Gray; Mrs. Baalamb, Mrs. Gray. This time the moral tragedy was to be preceded by a curtain-raiser, *How To Die for Love* with Morton, Field, Clarke, Hernizen, McClure, Lewis, and Miss Clarke.⁸ These two pieces were followed next evening, June 26, according to an advertisement in the *Times* of that day, by *Zemluca* with Miss Placide as Almazaide and a "first-time" performance of *Touch and Take*. There was also a performance of *The Falls of Clyde*,⁹ but just when I do not know. The *Republican* came

⁸ *St. Louis Beacon*, June 24, 1830.

⁹ *Ibid.*, July 1, 1830.

out on Tuesday, its rival on Thursday, and many productions doubtless fell between two stools.

For her benefit, on the last day of the month, Miss Placide selected John Howard Payne's *Therese, the Orphan of Geneva*, with the farce, *The Hundred Pound Note*. In the former, she, of course, played the title rôle; in the latter, Miss Arlington, "with the original *Bavarian Girl's* BROOM SONG," to the Billy Black of Hernizen. In the melodrama, Field seems to have made a good impression as Carwin. Keemle, presumably, says in the *Beacon* that he has become a favorite in St. Louis and "has only to persevere to obtain an enviable rank in his profession." It is interesting to note that even then Gilbert was advised always to "represent a grave and severe guardian," as "his figure and countenance are then in his favor."¹⁰ July was ushered in with J. R. Planche's *The Green-Eyed Monster* and a repetition of *The Lottery Ticket*, "which was received with much enthusiasm on its first representation."¹¹

On the third of the month, the second star, Caldwell, played Gossamer in Reynolds' *Laugh When You Can*, the "new farce," *The Lancers*, being included in the bill. There is no account of his second night, but on his third he appeared as Benedick in the local *première* of *Much Ado about Nothing* to the Beatrice of Miss Placide. The afterpiece, too, was new to St. Louis, *102* or *The Veteran and his Progeny*. Unfortunately the bill did not prove a great attraction, to the distress of the drama-loving editor of the *Beacon*. "Shakespeare's justly admired comedy of *Much Ado about Nothing* was performed last evening, to a not very numerous audience; the part of 'Benedick,' by Mr. Caldwell, was personated with that gentleman's usual spirit and effect." The failure of the public to respond to the efforts of the celebrated actor-manager, may, the writer feels, have sad results. After discussing Caldwell's professional eminence, he says: "It is from this cause, and the desire entertained by Mr. Caldwell to erect a suitable and handsome building, calculated for all

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, July 1, 1830.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, July 1, 1830.

the purposes of the Drama, that we regret the apparent indifference and neglect of the play-going public, during his short engagement."¹² The star made two more appearances before his farewell benefit: the first, in the *Rule a Wife, and Have a Wife* of Beaumont and Fletcher, followed by *Maid or Wife*; the second, with Miss Placide in *The Stranger* which shared the evening with *Zembuca*.¹³ On the benefit night, July 12, the house, "though not as crowded as we could have wished, was respectable."¹⁴ What the plays were, I do not know. Two nights later as no doubt a bid for popular favor two favorite melodramas were presented, *Ambrose Gwinette* and *The Forty Thieves*. In the former, Field played Ambrose; Clarke, Ned Grayling; and Mrs. Rowe, Lucy Fairlove. In the latter Miss Placide appeared as Cogia. This star had apparently become a fixed planet. On July 16, together with Mrs. Rowe, she appeared in *The Wandering Boys*. The first feature on the program for that evening was *Charles XII* or *The Siege of Stralsund*. Between the two pieces there was to be sung in duet form, though by whom the advertisement in the *Beacon* (July 15) does not specify, the famous negro song "The Coal Black Rose." This same issue of the paper remarked that Caldwell had gone, but it was mistaken; the editor had reckoned without the obliging steamboats. Two days later, the *Times*, which was published only on Saturdays, printed an advertisement to the effect that the star "who is detained in town, waiting for the arrival of the steamboat Huntsman [three years before it was the "Essex"] is engaged FOR THIS NIGHT ONLY" and is to appear as the Three Singles. On the same evening St. Louis first heard "Home, Sweet Home" in its proper setting, John Howard Payne's *Clari, the Maid of Milan*. This favorite air fell to the lot first of Miss Placide, and then was repeated by Miss Clarke. In order that nothing might be wanting, someone interpolated the "Hunting Song" from Weber's *Der Freischütz* into the

¹² *Ibid.*, July 8, 1830.

¹³ *St. Louis Times*, July 10, 1830.

¹⁴ *St. Louis Beacon*, July 15, 1830.

midst of Bishop's score. Perhaps after all this, Caldwell caught his boat.

The *Beacon* of July 15 reveals the fact that in one respect at least the season had been a disappointment. Where, demands "An Observer," is the splendid scenery promised by Mondelli?

As yet, although upwards of a month has elapsed, scarcely one new scene has been produced; on the contrary, several melodramas, presented last season, and repeated this, have totally failed to create that vivid though deep impression on the public mind, which the former exertions of even Mr. M'Cafferty seldom or [n]ever failed to produce.

The stage manager, too, is raked over the coals, and there is a sarcastic repetition of the phrase "*the highest dramatic treat ever given in St. Louis*" which had been used in the early propaganda.

After this there ensues a hiatus. The next production of which we have a record should certainly have proved a drawing-card, a repetition of *Ambrose Gwinette plus Clari*. On July 24 the *Times* advertised the second night of *Masaniello* or *The Dumb Girl of Portici*, the first of which I have found a record, together with *Gretna Green*, Miss Placide essaying the mute heroine of the former.

On the twenty-sixth appeared Charles Parsons, the tragedian. This actor had been with Ludlow during his ill-fated season in New York. Ludlow was under the impression that that was his first appearance on any stage,¹⁵ but Wemyss, with whom he was later closely associated, asserts that he made his *début* at Charleston in 1827.¹⁶ He was now just twenty-five years old. On this occasion he played three evenings in St. Louis, as Rolla in *Pizarro* (July 26), as Bertram (July 28), and as Damon in *Damon and Pythias* (July 30). He was not a great tragedian even after years of experience; in 1830, little more than a novice, despite his New York and

¹⁵ Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, pp. 319-20.

¹⁶ Wemyss, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

Mobile seasons under Ludlow, he must have been decidedly crude. At all events, the theatregoers of St. Louis failed to greet him in the desired numbers. Once more I turn to Keemle and the *Beacon* for enlightenment. The editorial quoted appeared July 29.

THE THEATRE.—For the last 3 or 4 nights, has been, we regret to say, very thinly attended, although several highly attractive pieces have been produced. The only excuse we can offer in behalf of the play-going community is, the heat of the weather, which, *all feel*, has been intense.

On Monday night *Mr. Parsons*, of the Louisville boards, made his first bow to a St. Louis audience, in the arduous character of "Rolla." The style of Mr. P's. acting is not so effective as we could desire; his voice is irregular, and his gesture, at times ungraceful. Nevertheless, his performance, taken as a whole, appeared to give much and very general satisfaction, and the curtain fell amidst rapturous applause.

Apparently the shafts aimed at the failure of Mondelli's superb scenery to materialize found their mark, for the same article states that "the Managers . . . intend to bring forward (so soon as the new and splendid scenery now in progress, by Mr. Mondelli, is completed) several highly interesting pieces, never produced here, in the representation of which, the public may expect a rich dramatic treat." To just what pieces the managers referred I cannot say; the papers give information concerning few that had not been done before. The remaining bills advertised were: *The Devil's Bridge* and *All the World's a Stage* (with Miss Placide); *The Foundling of the Forest* and *The Miller's Maid* (Hernizen's benefit); *Man and Wife* and *The Lady of the Lake* (Miss Clarke's benefit); *Guy Mannering* and *No Song, No Supper* (Lewis' benefit); *The Midnight Hour*, followed by an exhibition of feats of strength by Smith "the Hercules" and a display of scenery, some of which is rather reminiscent of the efforts of earlier seasons (Mondelli's benefit); *A Cure for the Heart-Ache* (Gray's benefit); *A Roland for an Oliver*, *The Day after the Wedding*, and *Seven's the Main* (Mrs. Rowe's benefit);

William Tell and *Raising the Wind* (Langton's benefit); *Lover's Vows* (an adaptation of Kotzebue by Mrs. Inchbald) and *Nature and Philosophy*; and *Rob Roy* and *The Romp* (Field's benefit and the last night of the season). Individual comment is needed on but few of these. In the performance of *The Devil's Bridge* the audience enjoyed the novelty of a female Count Belino in the person of Mrs. Rowe, Miss Placide being the Countess Rosalvina. Hernizen's benefit on August 7 is worthy of mention because of its non-dramatic features rather than because of either of the plays on the bill.

In the course of the evening, Mr. *Hernizen* will sing 5 Comic Songs; among which, "*The Fashions of St. Louis.*" In addition, Mr. H. is happy to announce that he has engaged the notorious "*Jim Crow,*" for this night only, who will rehearse many new verses, relating to the recent election.¹⁷ He assures the public, that Jim is entirely neutral; and holds to the *mortal* text of the *immortal* Shakespeare, "naught extenuate, or set down aught in malice."

"Jim Crow" was the negro character-song worked up and sung with overwhelming success by Thomas D. Rice, and Hernizen was trying his hand at it, though with what success I do not know. According to Sol Smith, Rice first composed his celebrated song-and-dance act in that very year (1830);¹⁸ consequently St. Louis must have heard it very early in its history. Shortly after the middle of July Mr. and Madame Pearman arrived in town to give a concert at the Missouri Hotel. Bad weather postponed their first program, but they eventually gave three "concerts and balls." On August 12, when Lewis' benefit was given, they volunteered or were engaged to come to the rescue and both took part in *Guy Mannering*; Mr. Pearman also sang in the farce, *No Song, No Supper*. The advertisement closed with this rather dangerous promise: "The evening's entertainment to conclude

¹⁷ *St. Louis Beacon*, August 5, 1830. St. Louis had just passed through a local election in which the feeling between the pro-Jackson and the anti-Jackson men had been intense. In this fray the two principal papers had taken a furious part, the *Beacon* for the Jacksonites, the *Republican* against them.

¹⁸ Smith, *Theatrical Management*, p. 121.

with a Grand Display of FIREWORKS, designed by Mr. Lewis, representing *Pluto's Car* enveloped in flames, Pluto, Mr. Lewis." On August 24, the season came to a close. Unfortunately its success had not been so great as to give Caldwell great encouragement in his scheme to erect a permanent building. But that he had not abandoned the project we learn from a card he inserted in the *Beacon* (July 17 and thereafter) to the effect that he had constituted Charles Keemle his "Agent for the *St. Louis Theatre*, during my absence, to act and to do all things as if I myself were present."

Shortly after the departure of the Gray-Rowe corps, the citizens were offered an entertainment which was intended for the French-speaking rather than for the English-speaking inhabitants. This was a program of recitations by "Mr. Aristippe, Pupil of Talma; actor at the first Theatre, Paris; Professor of Declamation at the Royal Conservatory of Paris, and author of the Theory of Dramatic Art."¹⁹ He gave his first program on the last day of August, evidently with success, for he remained in town, giving occasional recitations until the close of October, when, according to the *Beacon*, he left for home to take up the scepter which had fallen from the dead hand of his great master.²⁰

Before the close of the year the Thespians, inspired by the example of the professionals, once more resumed their activities, giving *The Robbers* and *Crockery's Misfortunes* on October 23,²¹ and *The Poor Gentleman* and *The Irish Tutor*, November 13.²² Bad weather, however, interfered with the attendance, and the comedy was repeated later in the month with *'Tis All a Farce*, though whether once or twice is not now clear.²³ With this amusing bill, came to an end, apparently, the local dramatic activities for the year 1830.

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¹⁹ *Mo. Rep.*, August 31, 1830.

²⁰ *St. Louis Beacon*, October 28, 1830.

²¹ *Ibid.*, October 21, 1830.

²² *Ibid.*, November 18, 1830.

²³ *Ibid.*, November 26, 1830.

The next year they were resumed somewhat earlier than usual, and continued for some three months, but, according to all reports, with a depressing lack of success. Despite its financial failure, however, the season was in certain respects important, since it brought to the city a number of artists of real distinction. The first of these was the celebrated and long beloved English comedian George Holland, who had then been in this country about five years, and the second was the tenor Pearman. Just who was at first the manager of the troupe with which they appeared, I cannot tell from the notices, but very shortly Pearman assumed that position, if indeed he had not occupied it from the beginning. In the anonymous *Memoirs of George Holland* published the year after his death it is stated that the comedian had met the singer shortly before this, while playing at Natchez with a company under the management of Junius Brutus Booth, the tragedian. The writer asserts that the two men had known each other some years before in England while both were performing under Vincent De Camp, the one as a member of the company, the other as a visiting musical star.²⁴ It would seem not unlikely that, while in the Mississippi town, the two had come to some sort of a working agreement, and that this company may have been under both.

The first intelligence of the coming events is found in the *Republican* of March 29, which stated that "Mr. Holland, the celebrated dramatic Ventriloquist and commedian [*sic*], from the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London" would make his first appearance at "the Theatre of St. Louis" the following evening. The program announced was to be composed of: "The Whims of a Commedian [*sic*], consisting of VENTRILOQUISM," the whole of the entertainment to be "recited, acted, sung, and gesticulated by Mr. Holland alone"; the interlude of *The Lottery Ticket* (with Charles Webb, Mr. Madden, Mr.

²⁴ *Holland Memorial. Sketch of the Life of George Holland* (New York: T. H. Morrell, 1871), p. 40.

F. Baldwin, and Mrs. Carter); and the "imitation Burletta (written for and originally performed by Mr. Holland), called *THE DAY AFTER THE FAIR*. In which six characters will be sustained by Mr. HOLLAND."²⁵ Two days later the *Beacon* extended its welcome, observing that the theatre was again opened, and that several stars were to make their appearance. "Mr. Holland, the celebrated comedian is already here—Mr. and Madame Pearman are expected in the first boat from New Orleans, and Miss Clara Fisher, it is understood, will likewise be here."²⁶ The writer, probably Keemle himself, speaks highly of Holland's first performance. Unless plans miscarried, he appeared again on April 1 in the "petit comedy" of *Fish Out of Water* (Holland as Sam Savory); and *The Secret* or *The Hole in the Wall*, singing the comic song "Wedlock Is a Ticklish Thing." Between these two vehicles for the star, the interlude of *The Rendezvous* enlisted the services of Webb, F. Baldwin, Carter, Madden, Baldwin, Miss Carter, Mrs. Carter, and Mrs. Baldwin—rather a family affair I should conclude from the names of the cast.²⁷ On April 2, the last night of Holland's engagement, the program was opened with a display of ventriloquism called "The Pillbury Family" followed by a repetition of *The Secret* and the "new laughable farce" of *Deaf as a Post*, the cast advertised in the *Times*, of which the abolitionist Elijah P. Lovejoy was now joint proprietor: Tristram Sappy, Holland; Templeton, Webb; Old Walton, Baldwin; Crupper, Madden; Mrs. Plumpy, Mrs. Carter; Sally Maggs, Mrs. Baldwin; Sophia Templeton, Miss Carter. The genial comedian closed his brief—and, I fear, unprofitable—engagement three days later in *Family Fars*, *Cherry Bounce*, and *A Day after the Fair*, the occasion being his benefit.²⁸ On the seventh, according to the *Beacon* of that day, the bill was constituted of *The Maid and the Magpie* and *The Irishman in London*, an unidentified

²⁵ *Mo. Rep.*, March 27, 1831.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1831.

²⁶ *St. Louis Beacon*, March 31, 1831.

²⁸ *Mo. Rep.*, April 5, 1831.

Mr. King filling the part of Everard in the former and Miss Carter singing a song.

According to the *Republican* of April 19, the Pearmans made on April 13 their bows in "the admired drama" of *Brother and Sister*. Whether or not the troupe was already under Pearman's sway, the papers do not reveal, but an advertisement in the *Times* of April 16 for *The Stranger* and *The Irish Tutor* states that the Theatre is "under the management of Mr. Pearman." The Kotzebue piece was played by Webb as the Stranger, Muzzy as Steinfort, Mrs. Muzzy as Mrs. Haller, Mrs. Carter as the Countess, and Mrs. Baldwin as Charlotte. In *The Irish Tutor* Madden was the Terry. In this piece Muzzy performed Charles, and he was also identified as the stage manager of the company. This bill was followed, shortly, by *Black-Eyed Susan*, *The Devil's Bridge* (one of Pearman's favorites) coupled with *Nature and Philosophy*, and two performances of *The Floating Beacon*. "The grand nautical Melo Drama," originally announced in the *Beacon* for the twenty-second together with *How To Die for Love*,²⁹ did not materialize according to an advertisement in the *Times* of the twenty-third, till that evening, when it was preceded by *The Lottery Ticket*. Nothing is said about its substitute on Friday. The opera of *Rosina* or *The Reapers* was advertised in the *Republican*, April 26, for the following evening, the cast including Madame Pearman, Mrs. Baldwin, Mrs. Carter, Pearman, Muzzy, and Schoolcraft. After it *The Floating Beacon* was to be repeated. The *Beacon* of April 28 printed a card through which the Pearmans extended their thanks to the citizens of St. Louis (under the circumstances it is a bit difficult to surmise for what) and announced that, as they were leaving for New Orleans, they would take their benefit the next evening, the opera being *Guy Mannering*. On the last day of the month, Mrs. Baldwin offered for her benefit *Paul Pry* and *The Mogul Tale*. Things, obviously,

²⁹ *St. Louis Beacon*, April 21, 1931.

were going badly. Both papers praise Pearman's productions highly, but deplore the failure of the public to attend. A communication in the *Beacon* of April 21 remarks, "Indeed, there is an air of refinement, if we may say so, thrown over the performances, that we have often looked in vain for in theatrical companies, otherwise successful," and the orchestra is described as "excellent." The same correspondent has a good word too for Webb, who, he says, "is the ablest tragedian in the western states" and has immeasurably improved since he appeared at the Chatham in New York. There is also commendation for C. E. Muzzy, the stage manager, for omitting some gross jests from *Brother and Sister*, and a prediction of future eminence for his wife. Another evidence of hard times is found in the same issue of the *Beacon*. This is the announcement that the "price of admission to the 2nd. tier has been reduced—*right hand* 50 cents; *centre*, 75 cents; colored persons, as usual."

Before the departure of the singers, a fourth luminary appeared in the person of the celebrated Mrs. Drake, who made what I believe to have been her St. Louis debut April 25 as Elvira in *Pizarro*, Webb being the Rolla. It will be recalled that Ludlow lists Frances Ann Denny among the followers of Sam Drake who played in "Mr. Bennet's ball room" back in 1820. But, at the same time, as I have pointed out, there is little room for doubt that he was mistaken. On this occasion her performance in the Kotzebue melodrama called forth loud encomiums from both papers. The writer in the *Beacon* declared that she "enacted the part with great power, severe correctness, and fine effect," and added: "Her elocution is judicious—her enunciation is remarkably distinct—her action imposing, yet tempered by judgment—and her delineation of the passions extremely vivid." He also comments upon the classical beauty of her attitudes.³⁰ But these compliments are too tame for another admirer whose outburst appeared in the *Republican* May 10. A part of his letter per-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, April 28, 1831.

haps will throw light into dark places, and help us to eke out our incomplete knowledge of her engagement here.

The passionate, erring, desperate and remorseless *Elvira*; the delightful blending of gaiety and sentiment frivolity and wit, in the fascinating [*sic*] *Cheerly*; the tenderness, the terrors and submission of Therese, the affecting picture of penitence and suffering in *Shore*; and the giddy *Zephyrina*, have all been portrayed with truth as well as power. Nor can we omit her recitations, for which she possesses rare and pleasing tact.

Inasmuch as *The Apostate*, on May 6, was advertised as her third appearance, I think the versatile lady did exceedingly well to get all these plays in, that is unless Sheil's cheerful drama of *The Horrors of the Inquisition*, the subtitle of *The Apostate*, was eliminated in favor of *Jane Shore*. May 13, she was to make her last appearance, at Webb's benefit, as Calanthe in *Damon and Pythias*. All in all, I should say that she had compressed a great deal into a small time. Nor have I mentioned her recitation of "How To Rule a Husband."

At this point, I must linger a moment over what at least purported to be another attempt at playwriting in St. Louis. The advertisement in the *Beacon* of May 12 states that *Damon and Pythias* is to be followed by "a NEW FARCE, written for Mr. Webb by a gentleman of this City, called, THE INCOGNITO OF A DINNER AT THE INN." The editor refers to its coming presentation a bit warily, saying that he understands it is good. Closer acquaintance, however, failed to breed respect, and he was startlingly frank in expressing his opinion of the *opus* in his next week's paper.

THE INCOGNITO—the new Farce, written for Mr. Webb's benefit by a gentleman of St. Louis—turned out to be a most miserable, wretched affair, possessing neither point nor humor. Its fate was sealed in the common way at the close of the last scene. We are requested to state, that the author belonged to the corps lately under the management of Mr. Pearman.

So perhaps St. Louis need not bear the stigma of its creation after all.

Just exactly what was going on behind the scenes all this

time is not to me entirely clear. As I stated above, the company had been, at least since April 16, under the management of Pearman, but he had presumably departed about the end of the month, and nothing was said in the press about his successor. On May 14 the *Times* published this communication from the stage manager:

Mr. Muzzy would beg leave to inform the St. Louis audience, that circumstances (*injustice to all parties*) having compelled him to surrender the possession of the present Theatre, he would respectfully appeal for the first time in this place in a *Farewell Benefit*, with the hope that the selection he has made will be worthy of their patronage.

This, I think, is slightly ambiguous; I refer to the phrase "*injustice to all.*" As it stands, the phrase is to say the least awkward; if the first word is divided in two, the grammar is better and the sense quite different. But it is impossible to tell whether Muzzy was disgruntled or reconciled to his fate. At all events, he would appear either to have been left behind as viceroy for the departed tenor or to have taken the company over on his own responsibility. Whichever was the case, he was soon dethroned.

The same *Beacon* (May 19) which so utterly damned *The Incognito* (the author of which, it will be observed, prudently remained incognito himself) printed a notice to the effect that the Theatre had opened under the management of Mr. N. M. Ludlow,

a gentleman not unknown to many of our citizens as the manager of a dramatic corps which visited St. Louis some ten or eleven years since, and at that early period contributed much to the amusement of our town. Mr. Ludlow, since that time, has been the manager and proprietor of several Theatres in the South, and has secured to himself in that quarter the good opinion of those, whose deportment and talent make their good opinion worth possessing. As a performer, in the line of genteel comedy, Mr. L. has few superiors on the American Stage.

He is now, the article states, acting as agent for Mr. Caldwell. Before going into the mystery, I shall dispose of the

rest of the notice. It gives a list of the members of the company, which includes many familiar names: Mrs. Ludlow, Mr. and Mrs. Sol Smith, Mr. and Mrs. McClure, Mr. Gilbert, and Mr. L. Smith, to which are added those of Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Marks, Mr. and Mrs. Muzzy, Mr. T. K. Pearson, and Mr. E. S. Conner.³¹ It states further that Mrs. Drake has been engaged, and also "Miss Crampton, whose precocious talent has elicited for her and deserves the name of prodigy." Finally, "many new and beautiful pieces" are promised. There is to be a performance every evening of the week, commencing immediately with *The School for Scandal* (Charles Surface, Ludlow; Lady Teazle, Mrs. Drake) plus *Old and Young* or *The Four Mowbrays* with Miss Crampton in four different rôles. (Charlotte Crampton was then, according to Allston Brown, fifteen years old, and had only just made her début, in Cincinnati.)³²

The notice just quoted speaks of the Theatre's having opened. This was on May 19; yet the week before the *Beacon* had carried advertisements for the benefits of Mrs. Muzzy and Mr. Madden (plays not specified), on the fourteenth and sixteenth, respectively. That for the Sheridan masterpiece does not state whether or not it was the first production after the "opening," but at all events, there cannot have been very much of a hiatus. Furthermore, two weeks later, Mrs. Muzzy was still on hand, for her benefit "which was before unavoidably postponed" was now scheduled for May 30, the pieces to be *The Conquest of Taranto* and *The Two Pages of Frederick the Great*.³³ An editorial in Keemle's paper of June 2 does not make matters any clearer. "The performances for the benefit of the members of the corps lately under Mr. Pearman's management being finished, Mr. Ludlow will commence his season." This was nearly a fortnight after the an-

³¹ The initials are not in every instance given in this particular number of the *Beacon*. I have inserted them on the basis of other information.

³² Brown, *History of the American Stage*, p. 85.

³³ *St. Louis Times*, May 28, 1831.

nouncement that the Theatre had opened under Ludlow. One would expect to find some explanation of all this in the manager's autobiography, but there is none. He merely says that, acting for Caldwell, he and his company "opened in St. Louis about the middle of May, 1831, with a good comedy and farce, and for a few nights played to very fair business, considering that the city did not contain then above eight thousand inhabitants."³⁴ Of the Pearman company, there is no mention, and, although correct in certain details, the account is largely erroneous. Ludlow asserts that there were no stars, quite forgetting Mrs. Drake, but he is correct in saying that he "was very soon forced to bring out spectacular pieces in order to draw the people to the theatre." These were produced with great *éclat* if not with the financial results desired. Before resorting to them, however, he gave, on June 1, *The Busy Body* (in which eleven years before he had made his first appearance in St. Louis) and *The Dumb Girl of Genoa*, the former "very chastely," according to Keemle, who added disgustedly: "It is with pain and mortification we allude to the house. Pieces so interesting—performance so excellent—an audience so small, argues nothing in favor of our taste."³⁵

So Ludlow brought out his melodramas. *The Two Galley Slaves*, translated from the French by John Howard Payne, was promised for June 4.³⁶ On the sixth and again on the tenth *The Innkeeper's Daughter* was mounted in a style which dazzled the enthusiastic editor of the *Beacon*, and, I must confess, perplexes me somewhat, since I cannot see how the manager, able as he was, could achieve such effects in the salt house, of which he was so contemptuous. I am inclined to suspect that Keemle, or whoever wrote the editorial, was in a highly receptive mood when he saw the spectacle. Let me quote briefly from his review of the first performance, printed on June 9.

Its varied scenery, of land and water, was arranged in the happiest manner, and does the greatest credit to the talent and indus-

³⁴ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 379. The estimate of the population is a bit large.

³⁵ *St. Louis Beacon*, June 2, 1831.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, June 2, 1831.

try of the Manager. The old church yard was most excellently delineated; its half-ruined and half-fallen tomb-stones, with their half-obliterated descriptions—the gloom which was thrown around it—the waving of its trees in the night storm—the deep, solemn tones of the church bell—all gave to the beholder impressions of a secret dread which such scenes are calculated to produce. The difficulties attending the representation of sea scenes have been almost completely overcome by the ingenuity of the Manager. There where Mary springs into a boat, and dashes out into the waves to the defence of Richard, is almost perfect. We see the perturbed waters lashing the shore, the breaking waves in the distance, the boat gliding over them with its sail spread to the wind, and as if at every instant it would be engulfed.³⁷

All I can say is that Ludlow must, if the writer saw correctly, have been a genius. Yet in his reminiscences he passes over this achievement in silence, hastening on to others, in which he apparently took greater pride, *Paul Jones*, with John Gilbert as Long Tom Coffin, and his favorite *Cherry and Fair Star*, a spectacular fairy opera, which he gave twice, for his own and his wife's benefits. He states that, on his evening at least, the latter drew a good house. If he lived up to his advertisements, he certainly deserved to have the old salt house crowded to the doors, for he promised effects which would awe a stage manager of the present day with all the resources at his command. How they could be accomplished on that stage with only lamps for lighting, is wholly beyond my comprehension. Yet the papers testify that Ludlow's productions were remarkable, and I see no reason for discrediting the opinions of intelligent observers. At its first performance, *Cherry and Fair Star* was preceded by the comic opera *Of Age To-morrow*, in which Ludlow says he "personated five different characters." Of greater interest is the fact that on Mrs. Ludlow's night, the curtain-raiser was *Rip Van Winkle*, "a NEW and laughable DRAMA, in two ACTS (now performing in all the principle Theatres in the U. States)."³⁸ This, however, was not the comedy in the form made so popular by Joseph Jefferson years later.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, June 9, 1831.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1831.

But the season was not entirely given over to melodrama. Ludlow found time, on June 24, to introduce *Twelfth Night* to St. Louis audiences, with *The Purse* thrown in for good measure. Unfortunately, he does not mention this bill in his book, and our only source of information is the advertisement in the *Beacon* of June 23. I should like to know how the first St. Louis performance of perhaps the greatest of Shakespeare's comedies was cast, but the knowledge is not vouchsafed us. For her benefit Mrs. McClure chose *Joan of Arc*, which was followed by *Catharine and Petruchio*, with Ludlow playing Petruchio to her "Kate." Over Sol Smith's benefit, we must pause a moment. Of course it was *The Hypocrite* so that he might enact Mr. Mawworm, at that time his great part, and also *The Beehive*. His card in the *Republican* of June 28 is amusing. The advertisements for the recent spectacles had, of course, laid great stress upon the *new* scenery, *new* dresses, and so forth, with which these pieces were to be lavishly decorated. Then along comes the company's low comedian with his appeal for public support.

NOTHING NEW!!

"Old Sol" respectfully announces to his old friends the public of St. Louis that his benefit will take place at the old theatre on

Saturday Evening, July 2nd.

Where will be acted the old comedy of the

Hypocrite

With old scenery old dresses etc. After which a number of old songs by "Old Sol," "Old Marks" and Mrs. Smith. The whole to conclude with the old farce of the

Bee Hive

Or, Industry Must Prosper.

The old gentleman hopes that on this occasion old times may be revived. "Should old acquaintance be forgot?"

In his account of the season, Ludlow says that he celebrated the Fourth of July with the "patriotic drama entitled 'She Would Be a Soldier, or The Plains of Chippewa,' written by M. M. Noah, Esq." and the farce *Sprigs of Laurel*, "in

which I acted the character of *Nipperkin*, a broad low comedy character, and quite different from those of my usual line of business," which, however, he had often played with success. There are also in the *Beacon* advertisements for two more bills: "Last Night but one. . . . For the Benefit of the Sufferers by the Fire in Fayetteville," *The Cataract of the Ganges*, first time in St. Louis, preceded by the comic opera *Turn Out*; and, Mrs. Smith's benefit, on July 9, a repetition of *The Hypocrite* followed by the popular melodrama, *The Broken Sword*. After this, despairing of anything even approaching success, Ludlow called it a season and took his departure. There can be no question that financially his enterprise was a failure. That it was not artistically so, there is good reason to believe. A writer who signed himself "The Pit" stated very positively in the *Republican* of June 28 that on no former occasion has a Theatrical company been so much entitled to encouragement. The citizens of St. Louis, have been liberal in this way and at times when there was much less to deserve their liberality; whence the apathy existing this season, we are unable to say; it may be traced to several local causes which need not be mentioned—none that belong to the management of the corps—that has been calculated to give general satisfaction.

Ludlow himself lays the blame on the weather and the building. He points out:

This had brought us into the hot portion of the year, and the house was without proper means of ventilation; there were but three small windows in the audience portion, and but two on the stage. In short, it was as miserable an apology for a theatre as any I have ever been in, and it did not at all surprise me that the people did not visit such a place during the hot weather we had in the June of that season.³⁹

Who will gainsay him? There may also have been additional reasons, those "local" ones hinted at in the communication quoted above. The town was at the time torn by political strife, which was carried on with a fury of which we today know little, and which culminated shortly after in a

³⁹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

tragic duel which resulted in the deaths of two of the most prominent men in the small city. All things considered, it is perhaps not to be wondered at that under these conditions a town of about five thousand inhabitants, many of them French, did not give liberal support to the English drama.

However, the exodus of Ludlow and his associates did not result in the immediate closing of the theatre. It was kept open for a couple of weeks by Sol Smith, who, with a few of his fellows, lingered behind to try his luck with what Ludlow terms a "gagging company." Ludlow's assertion that this company was got together primarily for a tour of some of the southern states is confirmed by a card printed in the *Beacon*, June 2. "ALABAMA THEATRES,—Persons wishing to be engaged in the above Theatres, will please address me *immediately* at St. Louis. SOL SMITH." But the new impresario evidently determined to drain the dregs of the Missouri city before setting out for the South. In his *Theatrical Management* he gives this brief account of his St. Louis venture:

I find, by reference to some scraps of memoranda, that the theatre closed in July, and the main body of the dramatic forces proceeded to Louisville, while I with a small party gathered together in haste, opened the theatre *at half price*, and did a thriving business for two weeks. The newly organized company consisted of Messrs. L. Smith (leading actor in tragedy and light comedy),⁴⁰ Pearson, Carter, Baily, Short, Palmer, Jones, Wilkins, Mrs. Sol Smith (leading actress), Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Palmer, and Miss Carter.⁴¹

What plays this left-over troupe presented Smith does not say, but an advertisement in the *Beacon* of July 21 reveals that on the following evening the fearsomely popular *The Gambler's Fate* was resurrected, with the ill-starred Lem Smith this time serving as the awful example and Mrs. Sol

⁴⁰ This was Lemuel Smith's last appearance in St. Louis. The following year, while making a tour of Georgia, he was murdered (at the age of twenty-seven), and his brother Sol studied law and had himself admitted to the bar solely that he might assist in the prosecution of the murderer (Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 243 ff.).

⁴¹ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

Smith as the unhappy Julia, preceded by *Three and the Deuce* with Sol of course as the Three Singles. The next evening, Saturday, July 23, the curtain fell for the last time that season, and the "gagging company" set out for the South, and, except for some exhibitions of "Natural Philosophy and Necromancy" by one Mr. Wiess, at the City Hotel, the entertainments of the year 1831 were, so far as I have been able to discover, concluded.

One circumstance of the season just discussed I have for the time being passed over. It marks the beginning of what to me constitutes the most regrettable feature of the annals of the St. Louis stage. This is the long-lived and increasingly bitter quarrel which developed between the two men who, as partners, dominated for nearly twenty years the stage, not only of St. Louis, but to no little extent, of the South. I mean of course Ludlow and Smith. Inasmuch as this feud did not reach its greatest intensity until after the dissolution of their partnership and, strange to say, seems to have had but little effect upon the actual course of events in their business, I should prefer to let it be forgotten. But so much stress is laid upon it in Ludlow's *Dramatic Life as I Found It* that it cannot be ignored. I shall, however, postpone discussion of the deplorable affair until a later chapter, and close this one on a pleasanter note. Once more we encounter an old friend, the Adam as it were of the St. Louis stage, in a new rôle. On April 19, we find in the *Republican* the following card:

Doct. Eugene Leitensdorfer.

OFFERS his professional services to the citizens of St. Louis. He will be found at the Drug Store of Messrs. J. Charless & Son.

Dr. L. has in his possession certificates of his services while attached to the British Navy, which can be examined by those who feel disposed.

N.B. He has a sovereign remedy for the Ring Worm, which he recommends as infallible.

E. L.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SALT HOUSE IN ITS GLORY,

1832-35

UPON the events of the next two years, I cannot, I regret to say, throw a very great deal of light. The amateurs continued to function, and at least two professional troupes visited the town, but newspaper references are scant. St. Louisans had other things to think of. They were suffering from one of the most dreaded scourges of the day, the Asiatic cholera, and so serious were its ravages that they had little thought for theatrical amusement or desire to congregate in badly ventilated buildings. It is, indeed, surprising that anything was even attempted. Nevertheless, on July 24, 1832, "The St. Louis Juvenile Thespians" announced that on that evening they would "present to their friends" Mrs. Cowley's two-act farce *Who's the Dupe?* and the interlude of *The Day after the Wedding*, the tickets to be had as usual at the *Beacon* office, where boxes also could be secured on application. Who these youthful players were and what were their ages, history does not reveal. Then shortly after the middle of August, on the twentieth to be exact, the Western Roscian Society emerged from the theatrical void, with the favorite *Douglas* and the afterpiece of *The Deaf Lover*. This performance was advertised in the *Beacon* of August 16, and I presume came off as scheduled. Exactly a month later (September 20) the same paper announced *The Lady of the Lake* and 'Tis All a Farce by the same society, and this performance we know was given because a week later through the columns of the *Beacon* the actors thanked "the very indulgent and respectable audience" which had applauded their efforts of the twenty-second, and added that, having been granted possession of the

Theatre for one more night, they would repeat the bill the next evening.

Meantime, on September 4, one "MR. FITZHENRY (Late of the English, Irish, and Parisian Theatres Royal)" announced his arrival in the city and his plan to "deliver a new RECITATIVE & MUSICAL PERFORMANCE similar to those entertainments so much admired and patronized by the nobility and gentry of European countries, on next *Thursday Evening*, at 8 o'clock," I suppose at the salt house since no other place was specified. Whether or not St. Louis society emulated the example of the Old World *haut ton*, I cannot say.

During October the cholera raged, but by November Charles Parsons was on the scene with his "Dramatic Corps" including no less a light than Mrs. Drake and also Mrs. Crooks, who as Mrs. Mason and then as Mrs. Entwistle had been playing in New York off and on since 1809. Inasmuch as, according to Allston Brown, she was born in 1780, she must have been a bit mature in 1832; but she had been, and probably still was, a very talented *comédienne*. Information concerning the visit of this corps is very meager, partly because on November 1 the whole staff of the *Beacon* was too ill to get out the paper. I cannot even be sure whether Parsons was himself the proprietor, if I may use the word, or whether he was merely the representative of Purdy Brown. According to the *Beacon* of October 25, this horse-minded gentleman had arrived in town with his company the day before. But I have found no further mention of him at this time and the few newspaper references allude only to Parsons. Whoever was responsible, the season evidently commenced on November 3, for an article in the *Beacon* of Thursday, November 8, stated that Parsons had opened the Theatre on "Saturday last." The writer reported that the stock company was "very efficient" and lauded Mrs. Drake for her performance. On the sixth, one "Cyrus" hailed in the *Republican* the arrival of the company and expressed his gratification that Saturday's audience had been so "large and respectable."

He spoke favorably of the actor-manager and said that the *tragédienne's* reappearance "was hailed with rapturous plaudits, and her performance on Saturday evening has never been equaled here. Her personation of Evadne was chaste and energetic—abounding in dignity and depth of passion." He closed with the hope that "the presence of the Ladies, which adds zest to every scene, will not long be wanting, now that the 'night-walking enemy of mankind has taken its leave.'"

From the *Beacon* (November 15) we learn that on the preceding Monday Parsons had played Fazio in Milman's drama of the same name, and Mrs. Drake, Bianca, the afterpiece being *The Wandering Boys* or *The Castle of Olival*. On the fourteenth Mrs. Crooks made her début as Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*; if, as Brown contends, she was fifty-two, I should think she must have needed all her comic talents. A week from the next evening, she took her benefit in *Rob Roy*, Parsons appearing in the name-part and also as William in *Black-Eyed Susan*. According to the *Beacon* article the season was to close that week. It is not surprising that it failed to yield a profit, but the time certainly was unpropitious and the editor said the manager did not complain. So much for 1832.

The amusement program for 1833 was opened in April by one "Jeff Talbot," a "natural curiosity," according to his exhibitors of African descent, although in appearance a brute. "He is very intelligent, and will dance for the amusement of the company, and show his great musical talent by singing original Songs and performing on the Violin."¹ It was claimed that he had never been exhibited before except in Cincinnati. In St. Louis his performances took place in a private house. With the return of the warm weather in May, the cholera again manifested itself, and continued its attack on into June, but the paper declared that there were not as many cases as there had been the year before.

¹ *Mo. Rep.*, April 23, 1833.

On July 19 Purdy Brown inserted a card in the *Republican*, thanking the citizens of St. Louis "for the very liberal patronage he has received during his recent visit to this place." He furthermore informed them that "an AMPHITHEATRE will be erected by him, in this place, and opened for a short season, on or about the 15th of August next, when, in connection with his Theatrical corps, he hopes to offer a species of attraction (in the performance of Melo-Dramatic spectacles) never before introduced in this city." His "card" is quite wordy, and most of it may be spared the reader. "A part of the Amphitheatre," he assured the public, "will be fitted up for the reception of ladies, and every care will be taken to enforce order and decorum." Sol Smith in his *Theatrical Management* gives an amusing account of Brown and his faith in horses. For him, the merit of a play lay chiefly in the opportunity it afforded for equestrian display. "Whenever," says Smith, "he perceived that a play—be it tragedy, comedy, or melodrama—appeared to 'drag' . . . , he ordered out his whole stud of horses and circus riders, and sent them on to end the piece."² In his notice on this occasion Brown announced further that he planned "to open the THEATRE, for a few nights during the month of September, when, in addition to a talented *Stock Company*, he will have the honor of presenting to a St. Louis audience, the first *stars* that have ever appeared in this city."³ What would the tragic Mrs. Drake have thought of this last promise? And Mr. Parsons? Although Brown's publicity asserted that the season would begin about August 15, the *Free Press*, of which there are a few copies in the files of the State Historical Society at Columbia, Missouri, advertised as early as the eighth a performance of *Timour the Tartar*, "in which all the Horses appear," and *Family Fars*, with Mr. Farrell singing a comic song in between. The *Republican* of September 24 reveals the fact that a professional company played in St. Louis during

² Smith, *Theatrical Management*, p. 85.

³ This advertisement runs through the month of July.

that month, but that it was Brown's I cannot be positive. The "communication" from which I have derived my all-too-meager information is a "puff" for the benefit of Miss Vos,⁴ and she had formerly been with Ludlow. With Ludlow, too, had been Bob Farrell who was announced in the issue of October 1 as "a comical dog, whose phizz possesses a fund of humor sufficient to excite the risibility of a stoic" and who was to take a benefit the next evening. Ludlow speaks of Brown's engaging three stars to perform with his company shortly before his death the following year, but that, according to him, was in Mobile.⁵ No other pertinent data have I gleaned from the *Dramatic Life*. Of course, the fact that Farrell had been with Brown in August, coupled with the latter's promise to open the theatre in September, goes a long way toward settling the matter. Yet, as I said above, I cannot state as a positive fact that the troupe was Brown's, there being no conclusive evidence of the fact.

The Miss Vos who was having her benefit was none other than Mary, the daughter of John H. Vos, one of the founders of the drama in St. Louis, who, Ludlow says, had died in 1826.⁶ Having been born in 1815, she was at this time eighteen years of age. Two years later, she was seen at the Park Theatre in New York as Julia in *The Hunchback*, and still later, as Mrs. Stuart, was fairly well known. After the death of her father, her mother continued to act with Ludlow for at least a few years. The plays selected for the one performance of which we know anything were the ever welcome *The Gambler's Fate* and *The Somnambulist*. The benefit-bill of Bob Farrell, who in the advertisement was designated as the stage manager, was to be composed of *Fish out of Water* (Farrell as Sam Savoury) and *Honest Thieves* (Farrell as Abel Day), the evening's performance to close with a burlesque of the last act of *Richard III*. With this production the season of 1833 apparently came to a close.

⁴ Here misspelled "Voss."

⁵ Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, pp. 343 and 427.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

The year 1834 brought one brief season in the roundly cursed old salt house with Ludlow again in command, this time, however, on his own responsibility and not as agent for Caldwell or anyone else. His account of his stay in St. Louis is brief and reveals little of import. Having determined to rent the theatre in Mobile left tenantless by the demise of Purdy Brown, he says that he assembled a company. This corps he thought he could employ elsewhere as well, and

having heard that Mr. James H. Caldwell's lease had expired on the temporary theatre in St. Louis recently occupied by him, and that it could be rented if I wished to do so, I wrote to a friend there and engaged it, the rent to commence on the 1st of the coming September. . . . Settling up my late business in Louisville and collecting together my company, I started for St. Louis, arriving about the last week in August, and found the so-called theatre a wretched affair, [He can scarcely have been surprised at this, as he knew it well.]—dirty, ill-contrived, and poorly provided with scenery. As soon as I could get it cleaned and painted a little I opened it to the public, early in September, with a good comedy and farce. The performances were but moderately attended, and I saw clearly my season there must necessarily be short. The weather was yet warm, and the building uncomfortable.

From current issues of the *Republican* it is possible to glean a little more, but not a very great deal. Throughout the month of August, Ludlow ran a card preparing the citizens for the treat in store for them and stressing the engagement of "several STARS of the first consequence." These personages did appear, but I can give but little information concerning their activities. The first was the brilliant but unfortunate tragedian Augustus A. Addams, who was believed by some to have as much genius as Edwin Forrest, but who was prevented by dissipation from ever making the most of his gifts. The *Republican* of August 29 advertised for that evening, his last night, *Richard III* with Ludlow as Richmond and a Mrs. Hill as the Queen, followed by *The Young Widow*, with "Mr. Green, of the Eastern Theatres—his first appearance here," and "Mrs. Smith, of the English & Eastern Theatres—her

first appearance." The second star was T. D.—better known as "Jim Crow"—Rice, who on September 2 sang his "popular extravaganza of JIM CROW" and took part in his "Aethiopian Opera, performed upwards of 150 nights in N.York, called OH HUSH! OR THE WERGINNEY CUPIDS, GUMBO CUFF MR. RICE." This was his second night; how many more times he gave his popular acts, it is impossible for me to tell, there being no further references to this engagement available. He was followed by Charles Parsloe, the comic dancer, who appeared at least twice in "the Grand Pantomime, DON JUAN, OR THE LIBERTINE DESTROYED." The first performance I know nothing of; the second was given September 12 after *The Shepherd of Derwent Vale*, another melodrama. This was, according to the paper, Parsloe's fourth night. On the nineteenth the Ludlows played Ferment and his wife in *The School of Reform* or *How To Rule a Husband*, with an English actor named Watson as Bob Tyke and a Mrs. Rhodes as Mrs. St. Clair. After it, came a revival of *The Floating Beacon* (Ludlow apparently still had faith in the appeal of melodramas)—Mrs. Rhodes, Mr. and Mrs. Watson, and a Mr. Johnson. For the twenty-third was announced the last night of *Paul Jones* (with Ludlow, Johnson, and the Watsons) and *Rip Van Winkle* (with Watson and the Ludlows). For his benefit on the last evening of the month Johnson advertised *Black-Eyed Susan* and *La Perouse*, Parsloe appearing as Blue Peter, with a sailor's hornpipe, in the former and as Chimpanzee in the latter. "The celebrated Chief Black Hawk and party," says the *Republican*, "will visit the Theatre on this occasion." Early in October Mrs. Drake returned, and played apparently only two or three evenings; her arrival was announced on the seventh, and a bill composed of *Fazio* and *Nature and Philosophy* three days later was to be performed on her "last night but one." In the farce, the youth who never saw a woman was impersonated by "Mrs. Cargill"; I wonder if she can have been the wife of our old acquaintance of the

pioneer days. For Mrs. Drake, Ludlow "enhanced the price of the GALLERY to *one dollar*." An article on October 7 says:

If we mistake not, this has been done, and will, no doubt, have the desired effect, of preventing the respectable part of the audience, and particularly the Ladies, from being annoyed by those turbulent spirits, who always infest the upper regions of such places—but, it would appear, more particularly the cockloft of the *thing* which St. Louis has the proud distinction of *styling* a Theatre.

There is no reference in the *Republican* to the closing of the season, but it must have come about the middle of October. I end this year on a familiar note. On June 5 the *Republican* declared a "NOVEL EXHIBITION AT THE THEATRE. *The Life and Adventures of EUGENE LEITENSORFER, embracing his good and bad fortunes, will be rehearsed, in a short time, by himself, at the St. Louis Theatre.*" There then follow a recital of his more recent misfortunes, including the destruction by frost of "nearly the whole of his orchard," and a summary of his career, as it is to be "rehearsed." "In each character he has assumed, he will appear in an appropriate costume." The program was to be given twice, first in French and two evenings later in English. Let us hope that for once good fortune smiled upon the veteran.

With the following year, 1835, events took a definite turn for the better and, thanks chiefly to Ludlow, St. Louis became actually a theatrical center, but, as I have pointed out before, a center whose seasons, oddly enough for a town with its reputation, ran through the summer and not, as usual, the winter months. Never again shall we find ourselves in our quest of facts confronted by any disconcerting dearth of material. Plays were given as never before, and of records there is no really serious lack. This sudden access of riches must of necessity compel me to alter to some degree my method of attack. It will no longer be possible, except in certain particular cases, to give so much space to individual performances, although I shall endeavor to record all, at least of any consequence, that were given.

In this year, theatrical history began very early. In January the city had the honor of a visit from the celebrated John Howard Payne, an event worthy of mention, not because he appeared upon the stage—he was seeking “to obtain patronage for a new periodical proposed to be published and conducted by himself”⁷—but because he was at the time a prominent figure in the literary and theatrical worlds. The next month brought the Thespians once more before the public. In the *Republican* of February 24 they announced for the next evening a performance of *The Jew* and *The Irish Tutor* for the benefit of the Union Fire Company, the proceeds to be devoted to the purchase of a new engine. In April the Juvenile Thespian Association resumed its activities, giving *'Twas I* and a revival of Wetmore's *The Pedlar* on the first.⁸ Then on the twenty-eighth of the same month they repeated *'Twas I* on a bill with *She Stoops To Conquer*.⁹ I wish I knew the ages and the names of the young actors. On May 28 they joined forces with the *Amateurs français* (a group to which I have found no other reference) in a benefit for Mr. Mathieu, a local musician, their contribution being the farce of *Fortune's Frolic*; the French amateurs presented the “petit opera” of *La Créole*.¹⁰

During this same spring, one T. Somers Nelson, attorney-at-law, issued a “Prospectus of the Publication by Subscription, of a Comedy, entitled ‘Loss and Gain.’” The play, which was in five acts, was published in May by Charles Keemle, who about this time assumed the editorship of the *St. Louis Commercial Bulletin and Missouri Literary Register*. On May 25 the same paper printed above the signature “H” a brief and not overenthusiastic review of the comedy. To this review the author took exception, and two days later in a letter published in the *Bulletin* voiced his displeasure and requested the editor to print a scene from his *opus* so that the

⁷ *Mo. Rep.*, January 2, 1835.

⁸ *Ibid.*, March 27, 1835.

⁹ *Ibid.*, April 28, 1835.

¹⁰ *St. Louis Commercial Bulletin and Missouri Literary Register*, May 27, 1835.

public might judge for itself. This Keemle obligingly did, and on the first day of June a portion of Act V, Scene 9, appeared in his paper. Although, if one may judge from this excerpt, the play was no worse than many pieces performed on the contemporary stage, there is nothing about it to suggest that Nelson had composed a masterpiece. The scene is one between a more or less conventional villain and his former mistress; it ends with his pretending to be reconciled to her, holding out his arms ostensibly to embrace her, and then withdrawing them so suddenly as to cause her to fall prostrate on the floor. Although, according to the newspaper notices, *Loss and Gain* was intended for production by the Thespian Association, I have found no evidence that it was ever given by that society. As a matter of fact, Nelson was obviously an Englishman who had recently moved to St. Louis, and he stated that he had, before coming to this country, offered his play to one of the theatres in "the old world."¹¹ It can then scarcely be considered the work of a St. Louis author.

There are few other items to be dealt with before we come to the opening of the regular season, and they may be dismissed in a few words. The first was a "Great Declamation" to be delivered in the Theatre by "Mr. Eckenstein, from old Switzerland, and lately from London and Paris." This was advertised March 3 for the ninth of the same month, and I presume came off as promised. The other, which was presented May 19, took the form of a "Splendid Spectacle of the Destruction of SODOM AND GOMORRAH! an entire new and Original Production, Designed and executed by LEE, Manager of the Louisville Museum." There was also to be a magic-lantern show. This entertainment, which would seem to have run two weeks, was also perpetrated in the salt house. The manager was obviously a cautious man. "With a view to the quiet and good order of the house," he said in his card, "the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, May 27, 1835. On August 10, the same paper printed a communication signed "Othello," the writer of which, in commenting on Nelson's dramatic criticisms, mimics his English pronunciation.

Gallery will be closed.”¹² As the price of admission was but fifty cents, there was probably wisdom in his caution. The *Commercial Bulletin* of June 3 carried a notice to the effect that in “a spirit of liberality” the St. Louis Thespian Association would the following evening contribute a performance of Cumberland’s *The Jew* to Lee’s benefit. Five days later, the same paper printed a review of the acting from the pen of T.S.N., obviously the author of *Loss and Gain*. His strictures were on the whole not uncomplimentary. Yet to them, the editor appended a caustic paragraph in which he observed that “it is a very unusual occurrence in the western country, and especially St. Louis, to criticize the efforts of a Thespian corps.” Audiences at such affairs, while they have the discrimination to discern the faults of the players, “possess the generosity to forgive them.”

On July 3, Noah M. Ludlow opened in the salt house what was destined to be his last season as an independent producer, and one that was at the same time, I think unquestionably, the best the city had yet enjoyed. His company was, on the whole, a fair one; he presented a number of interesting stars; the repertory was large and varied; and, finally, performances were given almost nightly, Sundays of course excepted, until near the end of October. The chief drawback must certainly have been the theatre; but plans, as we shall see, were soon under way to get rid of that.

In attempting to follow the course of this season in Ludlow’s autobiography, we encounter the usual inaccuracies, but fortunately in this instance these are not so very numerous, and it is possible to rectify them by reference to the current numbers of the *Republican* and the *Commercial Bulletin*.¹³ In the first place, the season opened July 3, and not early in May, as he says. This is proved, I think, by his own advertisement and also by an editorial in the *Republican* of the

¹² *Mo. Rep.*, May 19, 23, and 28, 1835.

¹³ Ludlow’s version is given in chap. xlii of his *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, pp. 435-44, inclusive. I shall not give a footnote for each specific reference.

preceding day. To take up the latter first, "The Theatre," says the article, "it will be seen by an advertisement in this paper, will be opened tomorrow evening, under the management of Mr. N. M. Ludlow; a gentleman who is no stranger to our city, and who is deservedly esteemed." The advertisement states that "N. M. Ludlow has the honor of announcing to the ladies and gentlemen of St. Louis, that the Theatre will open on FRIDAY EVENING, JULY 3, 1835, with an admired play translated from the German of Kotzebue (author of the STRANGER and several other popular Dramatic productions), called the BIRTH DAY, OR THE RECONCILIATION OF BROTHERS" followed by *The Hunter of the Alps*. In the former the Ludlows and the Watsons were to carry the burden of sentiment; the only actors named for the latter were Ludlow and Tryon. This advertisement would seem to be pretty conclusive evidence that the summer season was being inaugurated at that time. Of course, it is not impossible that there had been a spring season in May, but in that case the papers would almost certainly have spoken of a "re-opening" and not an "opening."

Apparently there was a last-minute change of bill. Ludlow says that the first star was Mrs. Pritchard "who began about the 1st of July, and concluded with her benefit on the 10th of the same month. Her first piece was the 'Wandering Boys' . . . after which was performed the 'Wreck Ashore.'" It would seem that he was correct in this statement, since the *Republican* of July 4 announced for the "second night of the engagement of Mrs. PRITCHARD" on that evening the comic operatic farce *Of Age To-Morrow*, *The Floating Beacon*, and *Sprigs of Laurel*. In her opening bill, Ludlow reports, the visitor was supported by Mrs. Minnich and Ludlow himself in *The Wandering Boys* and by her fourth husband, Hosack, who out of deference to family sensibilities called himself Pritchard, in *The Wreck Ashore*. With this statement of Ludlow's the advertisement in the *Commercial Bulletin* which appeared the morning of July 3 does not coincide. It states

that the pieces in which the star was to make her début that evening were *The Soldier's Daughter* and *The Spoiled Child*. There is, so far as I have discovered, no evidence to settle the matter either way. Of Hosack, the manager says, "Luckily he was announced 'for this night only,' for the gentleman's success was not of that degree to make his second appearance desirable." On her second night, Ludlow played with her in *Of Age To-morrow*, in one of his favorite rôles, Frederick Baron Willinghamurst; others in the cast were Mrs. Ludlow and Watson.¹⁴ In *The Floating Beacon*, the star was supported by Tryon and the Watsons. In *Sprigs of Laurel* Ludlow took the stage as Nipperkin, with comic songs. On Monday Mrs. Pritchard played Alessandro Massaroni in *The Brigand*,¹⁵ a performance she repeated July 8.¹⁶ For her fourth appearance, *Guy Mannerling*, with her as Meg Merrilies and Ludlow as Dominie Sampson, was promised, to be followed by a new farce, *Mischief Making* or *The French Washerwoman*, with Mrs. Pritchard as Madame Manette and Watson as Nicholas Dovetail.¹⁷ According to the *Republican* of July 9, the lady of many husbands was to be seen that evening as Juliana in Tobin's redoubtable *The Honey Moon*, Ludlow playing Duke Aranza and Watson the Mock Duke, and again as Madame Manette. This was the last night of her regular engagement. As Rolando in the comedy appeared a young man whose name I shall have occasion to mention many times in the next few chapters, one of the most attractive figures identified with the early history of the St. Louis stage. This was Matthew C. Field, commonly known as "Mat," younger brother of Joseph, and at this time little, if anything, more than a novice in the art of acting.

Mrs. Pritchard took her benefit on July 10, but the advertisement in the *Republican* (July 9) does not specify what the plays were to be, nor does the *Commercial Bulletin* help us out. She was succeeded by Sol Smith, who had been engaged

¹⁴ *Mo. Rep.*, July 4, 1835.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, July 8, 1835.

¹⁵ *Comm. Bull.*, July 6, 1835.

¹⁷ *Mo. Rep.*, July 7, 1835.

for six nights, and appeared the following evening as Mawworm in *The Hypocrite* and as Philip Garbois in *102* or *The Veteran and His Progeny*. The next Monday (July 13) J. M. Field played *Richard III*. Since the newspaper was not published till the following day, there is no advertisement for this performance, and Ludlow does not mention the afterpiece. "On the Monday following," says he, "Joseph M. Field made his first appearance in St. Louis as *Richard III*, in Shakespeare's tragedy of that name." This sentence is ambiguous. If he means that this was the first time that the young man had appeared in St. Louis in that particular rôle, he is correct. If, on the other hand, he means that this was his local début, he is certainly in error, for he had played here four years before in the Gray-Rowe Company. We may wonder a bit at Field's elevation to stardom. Ludlow remarks that he was "just about this time beginning to think he was equal to any part in the round of the Drama. He afterwards settled down to what he was really clever in—eccentric comedy." He was by no means without experience, for he had been on the stage a number of years and had been intrusted with important rôles at no less august a theatre than the Park itself.¹⁸ Yet that he was a tragedian of stellar caliber we may reasonably join with his western manager in doubting.

Field and Smith now "starred it" together. Tuesday, Smith played in *The Rent Day* (with Mrs. Watson) and *Family Fars* (with Mrs. Minnich). Wednesday, according to Ludlow, they combined forces in *Town and Country*, Field as Reuben Glenroy and "Old Sol" as Kit Cosey, the afterpiece being *My Aunt* with Field as Dashall. The next evening, Field was Rover in *Wild Oats* or *The Strolling Gentlemen*, Ludlow playing Ephraim Smooth, and Mrs. Minnich, N. Johnson, and the Watsons the other characters. The *Dramatic Life* has it that the farce was *Three and the Deuce* with Sol Smith as the Three Singles. This may be correct, another

¹⁸ Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, III, 465.

last-minute change having been made, but the piece scheduled was *The Secret*, with the low comedian introducing the comic song "What a Woman Is Like."¹⁹ For the seventeenth *Three and the Deuce* was advertised, and I think Ludlow was thinking of that performance. On the same evening, Field was to try his skill in *The Brigand*, emulating the example of Mrs. Pritchard.²⁰ On July 18 Sol Smith had his benefit and "last appearance," on which occasion he acted Captain Copp in *Charles II* or *The Merry Monarch*, the comedy in which Washington Irving had surreptitiously collaborated with John Howard Payne, and Bowbell in *The Illustrious Stranger*. In the comedy he had the support of the brothers Field, Johnson, Mrs. Watson, and Mrs. Minnich. Joe Field bade St. Louis farewell the following Monday, Ludlow says, in Massinger's *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*. One might, he says, be surprised at Field's essaying so heavy and difficult a tragic rôle as Sir Giles Overreach, one which taxed the powers of the greatest tragedians, but, after all, there was little novelty in such a proceeding. Young actors were not accustomed to awaiting maturity and the fullest development of their powers before attempting even the most trying rôles. Charles Kean had played Sir Giles during his initial tour of this country before he had reached the age of twenty, and considered it one of his great parts. And, whatever his father may have been, Charles Kean was no histrionic giant. This does not, of course, mean that Kean played it well or that young Field's essay was an artistic success; it does, however, reflect the times. In this connection a quotation from a letter Field wrote Smith from Washington, D.C., the following fall may not come in amiss. Not without pardonable pride, he says: "I played Sir Giles in Balte., Booth's own town—plenty of applause, and I am told that they speak well of it here too."²¹ Whatever may have been the merits or the demerits of his interpretation, Field was not without support,

¹⁹ *Mo. Rep.*, July 16, 1835.

²⁰ *Comm. Bull.*, July 17, 1835.

²¹ J. M. Field to Sol Smith, October 6, 1835, Smith Collection.

for Sol Smith, in spite of the fact that on Saturday he had said goodbye, was on hand to play Justice Greedy, and Ludlow took care of Wellborn. The cast also included Mat Field (Lord Lovell), one Thompson (Allworth), Watson (Marall), Mrs. Watson (Margaret), and Mrs. Ludlow (Lady Allworth). After the tragedy, the audience was given an opportunity to judge of Field's skill as a playwright as well as an actor, the evening's entertainment concluding with his satirical sketch *Tourists in America*, with both the author and "Old Sol" taking part. Ludlow says this benefit "was remunerative to Mr. Field." After it, the two stars departed for the East, where Smith filled a brief and, he says, reasonably profitable engagement at the Park.²²

There ensued about a week during which no recognized stars shone in the heavens, and the manager relied upon the efforts of his regular company. The next evening after the Field benefit, the bill was made up of *Guy Mannering* and *The Poor Soldier*, interest centering chiefly on a newcomer, a young Englishman by the name of Spencer whom Ludlow featured as a star for four nights before he settled down as a regular member of the company. According to the manager, he was "no actor, and only a tolerable singer," but had the appearance of a gentleman. Though Ludlow does not say so, he also had a penchant for dueling, and was on one occasion guilty of something very close to murder. But he died fighting for Texas in the Alamo.²³

According to the *Dramatic Life*, Charles K. Mason opened a brief engagement on July 31, playing Hamlet. If the writer of an unsigned critique in the *Republican* of August 4 was any judge, the performance left something to be desired.

We attended on Friday evening the representation of Hamlet, hoping that Mr. MASON, whom we had heard praised would give us

²² Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

²³ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 436-37. Some time before coming to St. Louis Spencer had apparently been a member of one of Sol Smith's southern troupes (Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 104).

something to atone for the many murders that have been committed at the Theatre since it was opened; but we came away disappointed—for, thro' no fault of his, the play was spoiled. Of the gentleman's capabilities as an actor, we cannot, at present, speak; for from his entrance on the stage, he was so annoyed by her majesty's ignorance of the very words of her part, that it was impossible for him to enter into the spirit of the character—once, indeed he began to be Hamlet, but the fates were against him; his mother became suddenly *indisposed*, and the remainder of the part had to be read. . . .

Of the others—Mr. Ludlow's Grave Digger was better than his Ghost; Mr. Field's Horatio was respectable; bye-the-bye, we have a favorable opinion of Mr. Field, and mean hereafter to give him a great quantity of good advice. Miss Stannard's Ophelia got quite as much applause as it merited. Mr. Kelly deserves credit for not making a buffoon of Polonius, and Mr. Johnson censure, for making a blackguard of the King.

On August 1, Mrs. Hamblin made her bow as Letitia Hardy in Mrs. Cowley's "beautiful and fashionable comedy" *The Belle's Stratagem* with Ludlow as Doricourt, and *Nature and Philosophy*. In the former she was joined by Miss Stannard in the "MINUET DE LE COEUR and GAVOTTE."²⁴ The two visitors then played for a time on alternate nights. Monday *The Iron Chest* and the one-act drama of *Napoleon* of course featured Mason, who on his other evenings appeared in *Macbeth*, Schiller's *The Robbers* and *The Rent Day*, and what Ludlow terms "a kind of dramatic *mélange*" consisting of an act, or part of an act, from different plays. This composite bill, which was evolved for Mason's benefit, was composed of: the third act of *Julius Caesar* (in part) with the star as Mark Antony, Ludlow as Cassius, and Mat Field as Brutus; an act of *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*; the fifth act of *The Hunchback*; the fifth act of *Richard III*; and a repetition of *Napoleon*. "Notwithstanding the supposed strength of the bill," says Ludlow, "the theatre was not over-crowded."

For her second appearance, Mrs. Hamblin selected *The Stranger*, in which she had the support of Ludlow, Spencer,

²⁴ *Mo. Rep.*, August 1, 1835.

and Miss Stannard, and *The Lady and the Devil*, in which the manager played Wildlove to her Zephyrina. On her third night, the plays were *The Day after the Wedding*, with Mrs. Hamblin and Ludlow in the leads, and *Victorine* or *I'll Sleep on It*. That Saturday Mrs. Hamblin was seen as Albina Mandeville in *The Will*, which was followed by *The Secret* with Watson; between the two pieces she danced, or was to dance, at least, a sailor's hornpipe. The two stars made their first joint appearance August 12 in Sheridan Knowles's *The Wife*, as Marianna and St. Pierre, respectively. This piece was to be followed, according to the *Bulletin*, by *Demetri* or *The Evil Eye*, a melodrama by Jonas B. Phillips.²⁵ The program included also three recitations: "Belles, Have at Ye All" (Mrs. Hamblin); "Tam O'Shanter" (Mason); and "A Dissertation on Faults" (Ludlow). "Mrs. Hamblin's receipts," reports Ludlow, "were greater than the night before (Mason's benefit), but not equal to her talents as an actress."

Despite the ill-success of these two engagements, Ludlow thought it wise to give the stars another chance, and consequently retained them for a few joint appearances. The first of these was in what was I think the first St. Louis performance of *Romeo and Juliet* (Romeo, Mason; Juliet, Mrs. Hamblin; Mercutio, Ludlow; and the Nurse, Mrs. Ludlow) followed by *'Twas I*. Ludlow deplored the result.

This was an unfortunate selection for the lady, for although not old, yet she had too many years over her head to look like the tender, blooming girl of Shakespeare's creation; and Mr. Mason, although not too old in years, was too matured in appearance to look like the love-sick boy, *Romeo*. With heavy black eye-brows, and a face, though shaven clean, bearing evidence of a heavy black beard, he looked more like the sanguinary *Tybalt* than any other character in the play.

Romeo and Juliet was followed by Mrs. Centlivre's long-popular comedy of *The Wonder, a Woman Keeps a Secret*—not in Ludlow's belief an unqualified artistic success, at least

²⁵ *Comm. Bull.*, August 12, 1835.

so far as the male star's part was concerned; *The Mountaineers* and *Catharine and Petruchio*; *The Merchant of Venice*, with the guests in the principal rôles and Ludlow as Gratiano; a dramatization of Cooper's *The Water Witch* and *Napoleon*; and a "repeat" bill made up of *The Wonder* and *The Water Witch*. There remained, for the twentieth and the twenty-first, the two benefits: for Mason, *The Wife* with songs and recitations; and for Mrs. Hamblin, *The Belle's Stratagem*, again followed by three acts of *The Robbers*. In the words of the disappointed proprietor of the Salt House Theatre, "Thus terminated this double engagement, and with very little profit to anybody."

There then ensued another hiatus between stars, during which no dramatic novelties seem to have been offered except *The Inchcape Bell*.²⁶ Ludlow's account of the events at this time is not enthusiastic. "After the benefits were over," he reports, "some stock performances were given, with very little better results; the weather was too hot, and the house uncomfortable. Mrs. Pritchard returned about the middle of September and played six nights, going through her usual round of characters, but not to very good business."²⁷ The *Commercial Bulletin* reveals that among her plays were *The Foundling of the Forest*, *Mischief Making*, *The Forty Thieves*, *The Dead Shot*, *The Hunter of the Alps*, and *La Tour de Nesle*. The energetic lady usually took part in both plays on a bill. Her success in the last-named melodrama was so great that she was called upon to repeat it twice. "Any attempt on our part to give a description of the chaste and perfect manner in which Mrs. Pritchard personated the guilty *Queen*, would be futile."²⁸ Somehow, "chaste" does not seem to me to be just the right word to describe the murderous and rather promiscuous Margaret.

Some interesting sidelights on the course of events both on stage and off are to be gleaned from a letter written Sol

²⁶ *Ibid.*, August 26, 28, and 31; September 2, 5, and 7. *Mo. Rep.*, August 29, 1835.

²⁷ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

²⁸ *Comm. Bull.*, September 21, 1835.

Smith by Mat Field on September 14. The boy—he was but little over twenty—was still full of enthusiasm for the profession he had recently adopted.

I am doing the great big business here I tell you, Forrest's old line I am told—I do think I improve—have taken my Ben.—only cleared \$30, several circumstances were against me or I am sure it would have been \$100. Lud. charged \$105 expenses Watson behaved bad the other night and I believe its a final split—he dont play any more. Pritchard has returned—plays tonight—*Foundling of the Forest*—I am studying *De Valmont*—first rate part you are aware I suppose that Mason and Mrs. Hamblin went thro twelve nights and benefits here. I like Mrs. Hamblin. I think the impression here regarding Sir Giles goes to Jo rather than Mason I wish you Sol would bring me a handsome wig, dont stint the price, I shall be able to *pay* you, and right ready to *thank* you, in the bargain, the wig you was kind enough to lend me I find very useful but it dont become me.

Spencer is smelling after his usual dueling notoriety—he's had a quarrel with John Dougherty—I wish somebody would cowskin him.²⁹

If the newspaper critics passed over the individual performances during the month of September, they did not overlook other occurrences, nor fail to offer the harassed manager much gratuitous advice. Once more there was dissension in the ranks. For "behaving bad," as Mat Field put it, not only Watson but Tryon also was discharged. Such offenders, in fact any and all disgruntled actors, always were able, it would seem, to find partisans who would rush furiously into print to defend them and belabor the iniquitous managers. These two individuals were no exceptions to the rule. About the middle of the month the pages of the press fairly sizzled with the communicated ire of their champions. For what, demanded "W" in the *Republican*, were they dismissed?—"for getting a little 'fu' and 'unco happy' on one of the nights of their engagement." But serious as "W" regarded the loss of Watson, he deplored even more the departure of

²⁹ M. C. Field to Sol Smith, September 14, 1835, Smith Collection.

his wife, "the best stock actress in the west." Before closing his epistle, he admonished other members of the troupe, Thompson, Barclay, Wolfe, and "he of King Duncan memory," to try to get proper conceptions of their parts and quoted for their edification the anecdote about the actor who, running his words together, declaimed the famous lines in *Douglas* after this fashion: "My name is Norval on the Grampian HILLS!" eliciting from the pit the following shout, "What the hell is it in the VALLEY?"³⁰

To Ludlow we look in vain for his version of the imbroglio. He chose to ignore it, generously contenting himself with this observation:

Mr. and Mrs. Watson left the company about the middle of the season; so did Mr. Johnson and Miss Stannard, a little later. The two former wished to go East. Mr. Johnson was dissatisfied with the business given him to perform. Mrs. Johnson, his wife, was left with us until the close of the season. Miss Stannard, an excellent woman, had perhaps been a clever actress at one time in her life—beyond the memory of the generation in which she lived—but now unfit by age or talents to perform the business to which she aspired.³¹

But in spite of his trials and of the attacks aimed at his head, Ludlow appears to have kept serenely on.

In the *Republican* of September 26, was printed this notice:

THEATRE
MISS ELIZA RIDDLE

The Manager has much pleasure in announcing the arrival of this young lady (from the Eastern Theatres), who is engaged for Six Nights, and will make her first appearance in this city on

MONDAY EVENING NEXT, SEPTEMBER 28th
In Sheridan Knowles' beautiful play, of the

HUNCHBACK;

Julia. Miss Riddle
(Being the original JULIA in the United States)

³⁰ *Mo. Rep.*, September 24, 1835.

³¹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

The advent of Miss Riddle is seen in the light of subsequent events to have been one of the most important features of what was a very important year in the city's theatrical history, for it marked the beginning of an association which lasted intermittently for years and established the young actress in a warm place in the hearts of local playgoers. If Ludlow is right, she must have been at this time in her middle twenties.³² She came of a family which had been long connected with the stage, and she had been brought up in the theatre, or rather in many theatres. Although but "little more than a child," she was with her mother and elder sister Sarah, later also a great favorite as Mrs. W. H. Smith, a member of the Collins and Jones Company in Cincinnati in the fall of 1822.³³ The three Riddles were with Ludlow in Mobile during the season of 1825-26, and then returned to Philadelphia, their real home. Here it was that Eliza achieved her first real success, and it was with this to her credit that she returned to the West as a star. She was, according to James E. Murdoch, who had frequently played with her and who ought certainly to have known good acting when he saw it, "one of the most beautiful and accomplished actresses on the American stage, and a great favorite in Philadelphia."³⁴ Laurence Hutton in his *Plays and Players* gives an account of this part of her career, and I shall pause for a moment to quote from it.

The original Julia in America, we believe, was Miss Eliza Riddle. . . . Miss Riddle made her theatrical *debut* as *Julia* in Philadelphia,³⁵ and later at the Walnut Street Theatre in that city, supported Mr. Knowles himself as the *Hunchback* winning great praise for her careful and artistic rendering of the part. The play was presented by the Kembles at the Chestnut Street Theatre at the same time; it ran for some weeks at both houses, and the town was divided in its devotion to the rival *Julias*, Miss Riddle, as belonging to Philadelphia—she was a native there,—and as being younger in the profession,

³² *Ibid.*, p. 272.

³³ James Rees, *Life of Edwin Forrest*, p. 72.

³⁴ James E. Murdoch, *The Stage*, p. 124.

³⁵ This is, of course, an error. She had been on the stage for years.

receiving, perhaps, the greater share of praise. No local reputation, however, could for a moment have rivalled successfully the popularity of Miss Frances Ann Kemble, had there been no talent behind it; and Miss Riddle, in so sharing the honors with the great artist, clearly proved herself an actress of no little promise and power.³⁶

So it will be seen that Ludlow had really an excellent card to play, one of the rival Julias, fresh from the Philadelphia contest. Of none of Miss Riddle's performances this season have I found any review. The *Dramatic Life* has it that she played Juliet to the Romeo of Mat Field (I should much prefer to have seen this production, even with a novice as young Montague, rather than that with the mature lovers of a month back); Miss Dorrillon in *Wives as They Were, and Maids as They Are* plus Colin in *Nature and Philosophy*; Belvidera in Otway's *Venice Preserved*, to the Pierre of Ludlow and the Jaffier of Field, plus Lady Contest in *The Wedding Day*; Bianca in Milman's *Fazio* or *The Italian Wife*, Field filling the title rôle; and Ernestine in *The Somnambulist* (the drama, not Bellini's opera), plus Walter Arlington in *The Idiot Witness*.³⁷ In this last bill, Hernizen appeared in both pieces, but Ludlow is wrong in asserting that this marked his local début, since, like J. M. Field, he had been a member of the Gray-Rowe corps in 1830. Ludlow adds that, "he became a favorite low comedian in the West and South." Miss Riddle's benefit took place on Monday evening, October 5. For it, *The Gamester* was presented so that she might play Mrs. Beverly, and *The Wedding Day* was repeated. "Miss Riddle," says Ludlow, "had a crowded house for her benefit, and at once started on a long career of success with the St. Louis play-going public." She did not, however, leave the city. The *Commercial Bulletin* (October 19) advertises her participation in Spencer's benefit scheduled for that evening, playing in both *Sweethearts and Wives* and *Therese*.

³⁶ Laurence Hutton, *Plays and Players*, p. 148.

³⁷ For this bill there is an advertisement in the *Republican* of October 3, which confirms Ludlow's account.

She was immediately followed by Mrs. Drake, who acted in some of the same pieces in which Mrs. Pritchard and Miss Riddle had already appeared. The *Dramatic Life* gives her repertoire as *Fazio*, *The Stranger*, *Isabella* or *The Fatal Marriage*, *The Foundling of the Forest* (as Eugenia), *George Barnwell*, *The Maid and the Magpie*, *The Soldier's Daughter* (as the Widow Cheerly), and, for her last night and benefit, *The Hunchback* and *The Lady and the Devil*. This summary is confirmed by the *Commercial Bulletin*.

On October 13, Mrs. Ludlow took a formal farewell of the stage. According to her husband, she had never liked the profession and now felt that the demands of her family would justify her withdrawal. Consequently a benefit was arranged, and stars and stock actors joined to do her honor. The *Dramatic Life* reports:

That night was the first appearance of Mrs. Cowell (wife of Joseph Cowell) in St. Louis, on which occasion Mrs. A. Drake and Miss Riddle volunteered their services. The play was "Adrian and Orilla" (by Dimond). Mrs. Drake performed *Madame Clermont*; Miss Riddle, the page *Lothaire*; Mrs. Cowell *Orrilla* [sic]; and Mrs. Ludlow *Githa*. Afterwards, the farce of "Perfection": *Kate O'Brien*, Mrs. Cowell; *Charles Paragon*, N. M. Ludlow. The house was full to overflowing. Mrs. Ludlow continued to play until the end of the season, about ten nights more.³⁸

Ludlow then gives the remaining bills of the season in most of which the Cowells took part. Joe Cowell was an English comedian who had been in this country for several years and from whose *Thirty Years Passed among the Players of England and America*, a book of reminiscences which quite understandably provoked Ludlow's ire, I have already quoted. Ludlow asserts in his memoirs that Cowell accomplished his St. Louis debut as Flutter in *The Belle's Stratagem* and as Crack in *The Turnpike Gate*, a character in which the writer says he was "justly celebrated." There then followed: *The Miller's Maid* (Cowell as Matty Marvelous, his wife as

³⁸ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

Phoebe) and *Turn Out* (the stars playing Gregory and Marian Ramsey); and *Paul Pry* and *The Dead Shot*. On October 20, reckoning by Ludlow's calendar, Mrs. Cowell had her benefit, *Perfection*, *The Happiest Day of My Life*, and *The Miller and His Men*. After this, Eliza Riddle reappeared to play Lady Teazle to the Sir Peter of her brother William, the Charles of Ludlow, and the Joseph of Mat Field.

There remained but two nights of the season. The first, for which no date is given in Ludlow, was devoted to the manager's benefit, and was signaled by the appearance of his friend Colonel Keemle as Worthington in *The Poor Gentleman*: Miss Riddle playing Emily; Cowell, Dr. Ollapod; and Ludlow himself, Frederick Bramble.

The evening concluded with a romantic drama, founded on Southey's poem entitled "Thalaba, the Destroyer." The whole entertainment was greeted with much applause, and Col. Keemle conducted himself more like a veteran than a new recruit going through his third drill. The following night, and the last of the season, was for the benefit of Miss Riddle on which occasion was performed Knowles' play of the "Wife, or My Father's Grave": St. Pierre, N. M. Ludlow; Marianna (the wife), Miss Riddle.³⁹

So ended an eventful season. At the close of his account, Ludlow gives a complete list of the members of his company. Of these I have mentioned all except Williams, La Rue, Edgerton, and Cowell's boy Sam, later very well known on his own account. Whatever may have been the aesthetic merits of the performances given, there certainly must have been much that was quite worth while. Mrs. Drake, Mrs. Pritchard, and Eliza Riddle were actresses of recognized ability, and both Ludlow and Smith, to say nothing of Cowell, Hernizen, and Joe Field, were clever comedians. As for the plays, there were two productions of *Romeo and Juliet* (the first in St. Louis), and one each of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Venice Preserved*, *The School for Scandal*, *The Hypocrite*, *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

and *The Robbers*, not to mention two of the dramas of Sheridan Knowles. What other season we have passed under review has had so much to offer? And finally, we are pleased to note the significant fact that the manager's report closes without the usual lamentations about the lack of appreciation and the attendance. Ludlow was looking forward to the future with confidence. In that frame of mind he led his cohorts to Mobile.

CHAPTER IX

A FAMOUS PARTNERSHIP IS FORMED,

1835-36

THE progress of the years brings us now to an event which, whatever may have been its effect upon the fortunes of the individuals involved, proved beyond all doubt a very real blessing to the playgoers of St. Louis. I refer to the formation of a partnership between N. M. Ludlow and Sol Smith for the management of the theatres in Mobile and St. Louis. For nearly two decades this firm dominated the stage in both places, and for years played a rôle of decided importance in New Orleans as well. If on occasion accused by disgruntled actors of being somewhat overzealous in the matter of economy, it preserved, on the other hand, an enviable reputation for integrity and honorable dealing. Not always duly rewarded by the citizens it served, it brought to them a richness and variety of theatrical fare which they had never known before and for which, but for it, they might have waited long.

Into the circumstances attending the formation of this partnership, I shall not go in detail. A brief summary will perhaps suffice. Negotiations between the two men were opened by Smith during the latter half of 1834, but came to naught as a result of some misunderstanding. Both partners discuss this failure in their memoirs,¹ Ludlow in great detail, and each reflects seriously upon the integrity of the other, although Smith, whose book appeared first, carefully refrains from mentioning Ludlow by name. As a matter of fact, careful study of the two versions and of Ludlow's letters written to Smith at the time² lead to the conclusion that neither man

¹ Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, chaps. xliii and xlv; Smith, *Theatrical Management*, p. 116.

² N. M. Ludlow to Sol Smith, September 22, October 27, and November 13, 1834, Smith Collection.

was seriously at fault, and that certainly there was no warrant whatsoever for Ludlow's embittered accusations; they are contradicted, not only in his own handwriting in the letters referred to, but in the very passages in Smith's *Theatrical Management* which he cites as evidence. "It is seldom," remarks Joseph Jefferson in his autobiography, "that partners in theatrical management agree. Wood and Warren, of Philadelphia, were never on very friendly terms, and Ludlow and Smith were in partnership for many years without exchanging a word except on business. How they managed it, or rather mismanaged it, I can't tell."³ But in this particular case, the entire blame cannot be laid on the partnership. There had been at least one disagreement before the affair in 1834,⁴ and it was probably inevitable that they should clash again. Even after the dissolution of the firm, feeling grew more intense, and there arose between them the most bitter quarrel of all, the one which was really responsible for Smith's omission of his partner's name from his book of recollections. Nevertheless, they had managed to do business together for eighteen years, and to do so with considerable success.

Fortunately the failure of the two managers to come to an agreement in 1834 did not lead to an abandonment of the projected combination. They evidently met in Mobile the following spring, and on June 2, 1835, "Articles of Copartnership" were finally drawn up and signed in the presence of witnesses. Smith's duplicate bearing the signatures of both men is before me as I write. It is too long to be copied in full, but I shall give the principal features.

It states that the firm is to "continue for the term of *seven years* from the first day of November next, unless sooner dissolved by mutual consent, or the decease of one of the Partners." Each partner is to bring into the concern the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars, which is to be deposited in

³ Joseph Jefferson, *Autobiography*, pp. 115-16.

⁴ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 378; Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

bank, and each shall be entitled to draw out forty dollars a week, during the continuance of any season, "for subsistence." At the close of each season, "*one half of the clear profits* may be withdrawn and divided between the two—or *all* the profits may be withdrawn and divided in like manner, if *both* partners consent to such a measure. At such periods in like manner, losses shall be supplied if necessary."

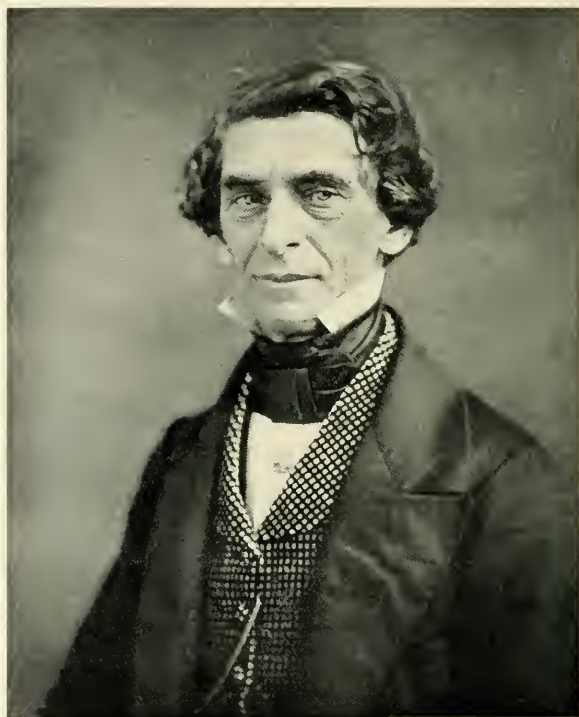
The duties, so stipulate the Articles, are to be divided in this wise: during each season one partner shall be responsible for "the *Stage, or Acting Department,*" the other for "the out door, or office business," with the express understanding, however, that in all matters of importance both partners are to be consulted. The two members of the firm shall alternate annually in the direction of these departments, except when one is out of town or incapacitated. If the absent party is attending to his own personal affairs, the one remaining in charge shall be on a salary of thirty dollars a week. The ticklish question of the rôles they were to play was settled as follows:

In the assignment of characters for representation on the Stage (so far as relates to themselves individually,) neither partner shall expect or require the other to appear in any character he shall not wish to perform—and such characters as they have been in the habit of performing, in their respective lines of business, they shall have the right to retain, except when such characters shall be performed by those technically called *Stars*.

The same arrangement was made for the two wives, who were to receive weekly salaries of twenty dollars, and also to be entitled to "a clear half benefit in every town where benefits are given under the management of their husbands."⁵

Whatever details remained to be settled were evidently attended to during Smith's brief starring engagement in the salt house, and the concern began to function, as planned, in Mobile the following fall.

⁵ "Articles of Copartnership made and entered into this second day of June, A.D., 1835, between Noah M. Ludlow and Solomon Smith," Smith Collection.



NOAH M. LUDLOW

(From a daguerreotype in the possession of Miss Cornelia Maury)

It will be recalled that Ludlow closed his letter written Smith from St. Louis in September, 1834, with the information that he was about to "issue a proposal for a *New Theatre* in this City." Confirmation of this is found in the *Republican* of September 26, which published the following editorial:

New Theatre—Fifteen thousand dollars have been subscribed by our citizens, within a few days, for the building of a new Theatre. It is to be commenced immediately.

On October 6, the paper quoted an article in the *Salt River Journal*, which said St. Louis had subscribed fifteen hundred dollars for a new theatre; the "small town" editor then lamented that a city which had already so many elegant buildings should allot so little to its theatre. This mistaken impression the St. Louis editor hastened to correct. He said: "Upwards of sixteen thousand dollars . . . were speedily raised, and more could have been had if desired. The estimated cost of the lot and house, scenery, and wardrobe, is fifteen thousand dollars." The sole remaining item of interest is a call for a meeting of the stockholders of the new theatre signed "M. L. Clark, Chairman," and published in the *Republican*, December 17. Clark, who was a son of the famous explorer, urges the stockholders to attend this meeting, "as nothing can be done toward the erection of the Theatre, until their decision is made concerning the title and conveyance of the lot on the southeast corner of Third and Olive Streets, not by majority alone, but by a unanimous vote."

The year 1835 had proved for St. Louis play-lovers a most eventful one. It had brought them a long and apparently satisfactory season, and it held out cheering promise for the future, not merely of a resident company, but also of a real theatre to house this company and to afford relief from the tortures of the salt house.

New Year's day 1836 found St. Louis, not only "by way of becoming," thanks to Ludlow and Smith, a theatrical

center, but actually a thriving little metropolis. The population had grown now to nearly twelve thousand, and the city-limits had been pushed out over the hills to the west on to the undulating prairies beyond, whence no longer came the threat of attack by vengeful Indians. The inhabitants had derived from all the Eastern and Southern states. Commercially the town had much of Yankee enterprise, but socially it was predominantly Southern. Testimony to the general prosperity appeared from time to time in the pages of the *Republican*, which notes, on April 30, that the previous morning there had been "TWENTY-FIVE steamboats, lying at our wharf, discharging and receiving cargoes" and added that "seventeen of these boats arrived during the preceding twenty-four hours; ten had departed within the same time, which are not included in the number above mentioned." The Mississippi was approaching its heyday as the great artery of trade on the western frontier. All in all, the town was on the crest of the wave, and conditions held out fair promise to the purveyors of theatrical entertainment.

Ludlow and Smith were not the only ones who sought to avail themselves of the opportunity. Nor were they in this year the first. On January 5, through the pages of the *Republican*, William Tryon and Company respectfully announced their arrival in town. Tryon, it will be recalled, was one of the performers discharged by Ludlow the preceding fall. Evidently heartened by the protests at his dismissal, he now returned to the scene and in many high-sounding phrases promised great things for the future. But the roster of the troupe he proceeded to present in the salt house was not one to cause any great excitement. Except for his own, the citizens encountered but two or three familiar names, those, for instance, of the comedian Hernizen and perhaps of Miss Stannard, whose days of good acting were, as Ludlow puts it, not in the memory of the present generation.⁶ The rebel

⁶ According to Allston Brown's *History of the American Stage*, there were two of them, Rachel (born 1800) and Sarah (undated). I know that the former joined Ludlow and Smith in 1839, but have no way of telling which sister this one was.

forces opened (presumably) January 6, with *She Stoops To Conquer*. I shall give the cast as predicted in the newspaper advertisement—I fear that it will mean little to the reader: Young Marlow, Alexander Rae (late of the Park Theatre, New York); Hastings, E. J. Mosher; Tony Lumpkin, George Hernizen; Hardcastle, T. D. Kemble; Sir Charles Marlow, S. S. Scudder; Diggory, W. H. Doud; Miss Hardcastle, Miss Stannard; Mrs. Hardcastle, Mrs. Byron (“from the Eastern and Southern Theatres”); Miss Nevill, Mrs. Nichols; Maid, Mrs. Hull.⁷ The afterpiece, *The Young Widow*, was to involve Miss Stannard, Mrs. Byron, Mosher, and Rae. The advertisement stated that the curtain would rise at “6 1–2 o’clock precisely,” probably because of the time of year. The next performance of which I have found a record was one of *Luke the Labourer* or *The Lost Son* (Luke, Thompson; Bobby Trot, Hernizen; Lucy, Miss Stannard; Dame, Mrs. Byron) with a song by “Mr. Barker” and a fancy dance by Miss Stannard. The afterpiece was to be *The Ploughman Turned Lord* or *Riches Appreciated*, featuring Hernizen. Of greatest interest in this notice is the information that T. Somers Nelson’s comedy, *Loss and Gain* was “in preparation” for performance in a few evenings. It is greatly to be regretted that we have no record of the production of this home-made play, and that, to the best of my knowledge, no copy is extant.

The *Republican* of January 28 advertised for that evening, as the manager’s benefit, *The Heir at Law* (with Hernizen and Miss Stannard as Zekiel and Cicely Homespun) preceded by the “laughable prelude” of *The Manager in Distress*. There were also to be the third act of *Richard III*, with Hernizen as the villain-hero, and so, I think, a parody, and *The Romp*, with Miss Stannard and the energetic comedian again—a fairly full bill. At the close of the advertisement the

⁷ I have taken the Christian names from a card of thanks addressed to Captain H. B. Coffin of the SS. “Warsaw” in the same issue of the *Republican*, January 5, 1836. Dr. Odell notes Rae’s departure from the Park in the following scarcely encouraging words: “Some very poor material had been eliminated from the company: Mr. and Miss Rae . . . assuredly could be spared” (Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, IV, 2).

coming production of still another original play is announced, this time *The Hoosier* or *The Yankee Outwitted*, a farce "by a gentleman of this city." If plans did not miscarry, it was presented February 6, as the concluding feature of Miss Stannard's benefit bill. Only two members of the cast are named: Obadiah Thrifty, D. O. P. S. M. C., Thompson; and Alice, Miss Stannard. We have unfortunately no account of the actual performance. It was to be preceded by *Turn Out* and *Is She a Brigand?* The next advertisement I have found, in the *Republican* of February 16, notes a change in managership. Tryon had vanished into thin air, and the burden had been taken by a physician rejoicing in the name of J. R. de Prefontaine. He evidently arrived with the company on the "Warsaw," for "Jos. R. D. Prefontaine" was one of those whose signatures were affixed to the card of thanks to the captain. Yet that he was for a time at least a resident of St. Louis is proved by the fact that his name appears in the city directory of 1838-39, his address being given as "Seventh, b. Spruce and Myrtle." This is the only directory which mentions him, but we shall meet him again and learn more of him later on. He seems to have been not without a sense of humor, for he made his *début*, and, so far as I know, his last appearance, as the "Manager in Distress," which was to precede *George Barnwell*, Miss Stannard exerting her charms as the wicked Millwood, and a repetition of *The Hoosier*. And that is all. Whether or not the actors appeared again, I have no means of telling.

The regular summer season, the first conducted in St. Louis by the firm of Ludlow and Smith, opened in June. Before it nothing worthy of notice appears to have occurred unless it be some exhibitions by "Mr. Schweighoffer, Professor of Natural Philosophy, and the art of Legerdemain" at the Theatre;⁸ a series of performances by "mons. Adrian, the greatest magician of the present day, either in Europe or

⁸ *Mo. Rep.*, March 24, 26, 29, 1836.

America";⁹ or a program, by "Mr. Huntington" of the "Charleston, Virginia, New York, and Kentucky theatres,"¹⁰ of "*orations and recitations, after the manner of the mental entertainments, which he formerly delivered in many of the principal cities and towns of the Eastern states.*" But these need not detain us. For information concerning the events of the real theatrical season we are almost wholly dependent on Ludlow, who treats of them in detail, and Smith, whose account is brief. There were, for some reason or other, few advertisements and no critiques in the *Republican*, the only paper of which I have secured copies. Probably the friendship of Keemle, the rival editor, for both the partners was responsible for its silence. The company was, says Smith, practically the same as that which had been playing in Mobile.¹¹ Ludlow gives the roster as follows: "N. M. Ludlow, Sol Smith, Joseph M. Field, M. C. Field, William Riddle, Charles Green, Radcliffe, Hubbard, [H] Walton, Kelly, Johnson, Markham, Jackson, Brace, Manley, Lambey, Adams, Neale; Miss Eliza Riddle, Miss Mary Voss, Miss Eliza Petrie, Mrs. Ludlow, Mrs. Sol. Smith, Mrs. Hubbard, and Mrs. Graham."¹² From this list we may subtract Miss Vos who did not come north, and Miss Riddle and J. M. Field, who appeared, nominally at least, as stars. I shall now turn to Ludlow, whose version is given in chapter xlv of his *Dramatic Life*. He reports:

The St. Louis summer season was opened under the joint management of Ludlow & Smith on the 9th of June, 1836. Mr. Smith was the officiating manager, *solus*, until early in August, myself and wife not arriving till then. . . . The first night's performance was the play of the "Hunchback," and the farce of "'Tis All a Farce."

Eliza Riddle, advertised as a star, played her favorite rôle, Julia, and Mat Field, promoted to leads, was the Master Walter; the cast also included Radcliffe as Sir Thomas Clifford, Jackson as Modus, Walton as Lord Tinsel, and Mrs.

⁹ *Ibid.*, April 26-May 14, 1836, inclusive.

¹¹ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, May 17, 1836.

¹² Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 454.

Hubbard as Helen. In the farce Sol Smith appeared as Numpo, supported by Mrs. Hubbard and Field. On her second night Miss Riddle was seen as Mary Copp in *Charles II* and Aurelia in *The Young Widow*. Saturday evening, the week was closed with Miss Riddle and Mat Field in *The Gamester*. Ludlow does not name the afterpiece, but it is given in the advertisement as *The Tooth-Ache* with Sol Smith as Barago.¹³ The newspaper notice stated that the curtain would rise at eight. During the following week the popular star shone on in: *The Child of Nature* (Amanthis) and *The Dumb Belle*; *The Wife* (as Marianna); and *The Rent Day* (as Rachel Heywood) and *The Wedding* (as Lady Contest). In all these, according to our chronicler, Mat Field played opposite his future sister-in-law. Her benefit bill was made up of *A Husband at Sight*, *John Jones*, and *The Dumb Belle*. In the first and last of these she appeared; in the second, Sol Smith was featured.

This concluded Eliza Riddle's engagement, but the next star, Joseph M. Field, not having put in an appearance, she was held for five additional performances. Ludlow says:

Miss Riddle's first night of the re-engagement was a drama never performed before in St. Louis, and entitled the "Sledge Driver," in which she enacted *Catharine Saltekoff*. Second night she performed *Amanthis* in the "Child of Nature," and *Phoebe* in the *Miller's Maid*. Third night, Mr. Charles Kemble's interesting play of the "Point of Honor": *Durimel*, Mr. M. C. Field; *Bertha*, Miss Riddle; followed by the "Three and Deuce": the *Three Singles*, Mr. Sol Smith, Sr.! Prodigious!! On her fourth night, Miss Riddle enacted *Jane Shore*, in Rowe's tragedy of that name; when Mrs. Lyons, of the New Orleans theatrical company, made her first appearance in St. Louis, in the character of *Alicia*, in the same play. On Miss Riddle's fifth night was repeated the "Sledge Driver," as before; after which, the farce of the "Married Rake": *Mrs. Trictrac*, Miss Riddle. The next night was announced as Miss Riddle's farewell benefit, when was performed a domestic drama entitled "Ellen Wareham": *Ellen*, by Miss Riddle; the evening concluding with the farce of the "Loan of a Lover": *Gertrude*, Miss Riddle.¹⁴

¹³ *Mo. Rep.*, June 11, 1836.

¹⁴ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

And still no Joe Field. To fill in the gap two old favorites were exhumed, *Douglas* and *The Stranger*. Mrs. Lyons and Mrs. Sol Smith both depicted distracted mother-love, the one, as the tragic Lady Randolph in *Douglas*, her husband being her stage-son; the other as the repentant Mrs. Haller in *The Stranger*, truly a strange character for the company's chief songbird. Finally, late in June, the missing star arrived upon the scene, and played Benedick to the Beatrice of Mrs. Sol Smith and Jeremy Diddler in *Raising the Wind*.

On Tuesday, June 28, he again essayed Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*. Ludlow seldom refers to his partner's participation in these productions, but here was a chance too good to be missed. After saying that Smith enacted Justice Greedy, he adds, "In this character Mr. Smith was quite at home; he looked the character admirably." He passes over the afterpiece. The next bill was made up of *The Children in the Wood*, Joe Field as Walter, and Field's own burlesque sketch *Tourists in America*, the author as Tristram Doggerel. Then came a family affair, *Othello*, with the brothers Field in the principal characters, Joe as the Moor and Mat as Iago; Mrs. Smith was the Desdemona; Mrs. Lyons, the Emilia. Somehow I cannot help surmising that on that particular evening, the audience excepted, Shakespeare was the principal sufferer. The Fields were delightful young men, and Joe was a clever comedian, but that they were at that time fitted or equipped to essay these two most difficult rôles, I cannot believe. Nor, I suspect, was Mrs. Smith able to cope with the subtle difficulties of her part, although she probably sang "Willow, Willow" sweetly. Again Ludlow overlooks the farce, but the *Republican* (June 30) says there was to be one with Sol Smith in the cast. July was ushered in with a triple bill. The Smiths appeared as Marian Ramsey and Gregory in *Turn Out*; and Joe Field as Dick Dashall in *My Aunt* and Sylvester Daggerwood in the play of that name, here designated by the subtitle of *The Mad Actor*.

Ludlow continues:

The following night, July 2, was the benefit of Mr. J. M. Field, when he selected "King Lear," performing himself the character of *Lear*; *Edgar*, Mr. M. C. Field. But the feature of the night was the *Duke of Albany*, Mr. Sol Smith, Sr. I think the people who witnessed that performance will never forget it! The entertainment concluded with the "Tourist," written by Mr. Field, cast as before. Mr. Field's night proving to be a stormy one, another was accorded him by the management. July 4th, the anniversary of American independence, was performed the "Soldier's Daughter": after which "Tom Thumb," *Tom Thumb* being performed by Marcus Smith "Old Sol's" second son, then about eight years of age, who, when grown up and known as Mark Smith, was one among the best comedians of his day.¹⁵

J. M. Field was now closing his engagement. He played Bertram in Maturin's tragedy of that name (I believe the first tragedy ever presented in St. Louis) and, for his second benefit, the comedy of *Town and Country*, in which he took the part of Reuben Glenroy, followed by a burlesque, *The Two Smiths*, or *The Modern Damon and Pythias*, with the two Fields. This benefit was, according to Ludlow's report, "only a tolerably fair one; the season had become too warm, and the house was close and uncomfortable."¹⁶ With the building's small quota of windows, this last is quite conceivable.

The weather may have been hot and the salt house stifling, but the plays went on and so did the stars. The next to make her bow was Annette Nelson, Mrs. Hodges, to whom local lovers of Shakespeare were indebted for their introduction to *Rosalind* in *As You Like It*. Her other rôles were Victorine in the play of the same name, Peggy in *The Country Girl*, Colin in *Nature and Philosophy*, Edmund in *The Blind Boy*, Marie in *The Citizen*, and Ernestine in *The Somnambulist*. She also took part in "a little *ballet d'action* entitled the 'Sportsman Deceived.'" For her benefit she repeated her performance in *Victorine* and appeared as Ariel in a scene from *The Tempest*,

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 437.

singing several songs. Whether *The Tempest* selection was pure Shakespeare or the Dryden-Davenant perversion is not revealed. The lady proved to be a success, and was re-engaged, appearing then in *The Dead Shot*, *Black-Eyed Susan*, *The Weathercock*, and *The Maid and the Magpie*, the two pieces last named being put on for her second benefit, July 18. "Altogether," says Ludlow, "Miss Nelson's engagement was a pretty good one to her and the management." The reason for her popularity is not far to seek; he reveals it in another page. "This lady was a perfect specimen of female beauty, but possessed very little dramatic ability. She danced and sang tolerably, but that was all; yet her personal beauty made her a favorite, especially with the bucks of the cities."¹⁷ This assertion of her success on this occasion is not, however, corroborated by Smith, in a letter written to his absent partner on July 20.

DEAR LUDLOW,

My letters must come upon you like an avalanche, all in a bunch. I hope you will read them according to their dates. Yours of the 4th is just received, and I think there will be just time for this to reach you at Cincinnati.—If you have not got a painter at the North (and I am almost certain you have not, in consequence of what I wrote to you about that . . . Smith,) suppose you try Cowell—that is, if after seeing his *Jewess* scenery, you think he'll do?—He might be induced by a two or three year's engagement to quit Russell.—I wrote you all about De Camp before—he may be in Louisville as you come thro'—if so, you had better close with him, and *article* him—for such pulling and hauling for actors I never saw before.

I will not say a word about the *embryo* Theatre—the Theatre *de facto*, (in english the old *hot* house,) is just crawling along—Miss Nelson is gone—Mrs. Lyons is sick, and here we are again with but two women, (Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Hubbard,) but we are much better off than we were with the same number before, for *then* one was a *star*, and the most difficult star I ever had to deal with. We have six more nights to get through with when Miss Meadows begins—and if Mrs. Drake does not accept the nights I offered her *after her failure to be here at the time she engaged*, (19th) we close 3d Aug^t.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 500.

—If Mrs. Drake comes 4th Aug^t. (and I think she will, to keep in our books,) we keep open until Saturday 13th thus avoiding much of a vacation, which I find is much dreaded by the Company. Miss Nelson's 2nd Engagement amounted to nothing—for *her*—except her benefit, which was \$170—of which she rec^d. \$35.—I wish to God something could be done to mend this starring system. I think *we* have mended it a little this St. Louis season—but there is great room for improvement yet—we *should* have our expenses and a reasonable profit before a star should touch a penny,—on benefit nights and all! As it is now, even on our terms, one night we have \$180 in the house,—the star gets \$15—next night it rains, and we have \$25—we lost 70 or 80—the star gets nothing certainly, but stands none of the loss,—and next night the receipts are \$200 and he gets \$25—it should be thus—our *actual* expenses we'll say are \$600—we claim a profit of \$300—so we will put our charges at \$900—you play a week, and a night—

Expenses—	\$1,050
Receipts (benefit included)	1,250
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>

Profit	\$ 200—half \$100
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Now that is the *only* fair way of dealing with Stars, except the *certainty* plan—giving so much for all the nights, including the benefit.¹⁸

The remainder of the letter contains nothing which calls for repetition. From what I have quoted I believe a little can be learned of things not to be gathered from the published records. The Smith referred to was one John R., a scene painter who was then at work on the sets for the new theatre. Cowell was “Young Joe,” son of “Old Joe” the comedian, also a “scenic artist”; apparently he could not be lured St. Louisward, for Smith retained his position. Of Vincent De Camp I shall have more to say later; he was a brother-in-law of Charles Kemble and an eccentric comedian who had fallen sadly upon evil days. The difficult star referred to so feelingly, I cannot positively identify.

I shall now return to Ludlow's *Dramatic Life*. “After Miss Nelson's engagement, they [*sic*] were three nights without any ‘star,’ during which ‘Therese, the Orphan of Geneva,’ by

¹⁸ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, July 20, 1836, Smith Collection.

John Howard Payne, was performed to good houses."¹⁹ We now encounter another conflict in our evidence. Smith in his letter of July 20 states that Miss Meadows was due in six nights, and that he looked for Mrs. Drake to keep a belated engagement early in August. Ludlow, on the other hand, declares that the latter opened on July 28, the former August 8. Who shall tell which was right? The *Republican* is of no assistance; it was busy ignoring the whole proceedings. Perhaps the schedules were changed at the last moment; the fact that in his *Theatrical Management* Smith lists the tragedy queen before the infant prodigy probably indicates that something like that occurred. After all, it makes little difference; both came.

Mrs. Drake performed for the most part her usual characters: Julia (*The Hunchback*); Marianna (*The Wife*); Margaret of Burgundy (*La Tour de Nesle*); Isabella (*The Fatal Marriage*); Bianca (*Fazio*); Evadne; the Widow Cheerly (*The Soldier's Daughter*); and Mrs. Haller (*The Stranger*). For her benefit, *La Tour de Nesle* was repeated, and she was welcomed by a full house; in fact, her entire engagement was profitable to all concerned.²⁰

Now for Miss Meadows. This child—Ludlow gives her age as about seven, although he says she looked less²¹—appeared not only in rôles suitable to her years such as Little Pickle in *The Spoiled Child*, but also in such unsuitable characters as Young Norval, Variella in *The Weathercock*, Felix in *The Hunter of the Alps*, Kathleen in *The Poor Soldier*, and Catharine in *Catharine and Petruchio*, to say nothing of the Four Mowbrays! In reviewing the company's recent season in Mobile, Ludlow gives an amusing description of some of her performances. He says:

It fell to my lot to enact *Petruchio*; and when, in his singular courting scene, he says, "Kiss me, my Kate!" I was in doubt whether to lower my face to hers, or lift her up to mine; I felt myself in a ridiculous position during the entire performance of the piece.

¹⁹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 452.

But the funniest affair was her duet in the comic opera of the "Poor Soldier," with *Darby*, Mr. Sol Smith, who was a man six feet and an inch in height, and at the same time constructed pretty much after the style of a hop-pole. The duet begins with these words:

Kathleen—"Out of my sight! or I'll box your ears!"

Darby—"I'll fit you soon for your gibes and jeers."

Kathleen—"I'll set my cap for a smart young man."

Darby—"Another I'll wed this day, if I can."

Mr. Smith sang as follows, for his first line, substituting,—

Darby—"You can't reach them for a number of years."

and for his second line,—

Darby—"You'll not find one as tall as I am,"

at the same time placing himself alongside of and looking down upon her like a long-legged heron in search of small fish. The effect was ludicrous in the extreme, and the poor little girl could not control her risibles, but in a fit of laughter ran off the stage.²²

This was in Mobile, but probably would describe her St. Louis performance just as well. Ludlow reached town in time to be again her *Petruchio*, an opportunity he did not welcome, and Smith was her *Darby*. His wife played *Patrick*. The child, Ludlow says, sang and danced cleverly. She traveled under the tutelage of a Mrs. Brown, a sister of Mrs. Charles Kemble and Vincent De Camp. After reaching the age of sixteen she lost her charm, being too large for children's rôles and not mature enough for heroines.²³ After little Miss Meadows' name in his list of the season's attractions, Smith notes in a parenthesis "quite successful,"²⁴ and Ludlow's comment is that "her engagement was good, and her last night a crowded house."

Miss Meadows was the last star of the spring season, and there ensued a vacation of about two weeks, during which most of the members of the company were re-engaged for the fall season and for the winter season in Mobile. On August 29, according to the *Dramatic Life*, Mrs. Pritchard reappeared, playing a male part, Alessandro Massaroni in *The Italian Brigand*. First a child of seven as Kate the Shrew and Young Norval, and now this! This was followed by sev-

²² *Ibid.*, p. 452-53.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 453.

²⁴ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 121.



SOL SMITH

(From an engraving in the possession of Mr. Sheridan S. Smith)

eral more suitable impersonations, two of them new to St. Louis, the latter being Agnes de Vere in *The Wife's Revenge* and Mrs. Turtle in a farce called *Hunting a Turtle*. More familiar were her other rôles, Helen McGregor (*Rob Roy*), Margaret of Burgundy (*La Tour de Nesle*), Letitia Hardy (*The Belle's Stratagem*), Adelgitha, Alice (*The Wreck Ashore*), and Louisa Lovetrick (*The Dead Shot*). Her husband, "Pritchard," né Hosack, was again with her, and appeared with her as Julian in *The Keeper*, a farce in which she took part after *The Belle's Stratagem*, and Marmaduke Magog in *The Wreck Ashore*, but Ludlow makes no comments upon his efforts.

For her benefit, she perpetrated an atrocity which not unnaturally aroused Ludlow's ire, and which ended in disaster. She played Rolla in *Pizarro!* The description of the exhibition as set down by her outraged manager is too good to be missed:

Her whole performance of the character appeared to me a disgusting burlesque, which founds its climax in the last scene, where *Rolla* rushes on the stage, after being wounded by a gunshot on the bridge, with *Cora's* child, which he places rapidly in her arms, and then falls dead at her feet. The white Peruvian shirt, which she very properly wore over flesh-colored "tights," had small weights to the lower edge to keep it down. This they did, so long as she was erect; but when she threw herself forward, in the act of falling, the weights had the opposite effect intended, and carried the shirt nearly over her head. Here was exhibited a *stern* reality that caused the men to laugh and the ladies to hide their blushes. The conclusion was anything but pleasant.²⁵

Mrs. Pritchard having gone her way after this embarrassing conclusion, her place was taken by a young woman who on September 9 began an association with the St. Louis stage which lasted for a number of years, during which she enjoyed no little popular favor. This was Eliza Petrie, later Mrs. Robert L. Place, wife of the manager of the American Theatre in New Orleans. She had been a member (I judge a

²⁵ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

very youthful one) of Ludlow's Cincinnati company as early as 1829.²⁶ I am somewhat mystified by Ludlow's statement that she was engaged as a star for the present season since she was "a favorite with the St. Louis people." She may have been with him in the city during one of his previous visits, but, if so, he overlooked her when he came to write his recollections, and this would be a bit strange since she had for years been playing leads. She had, he says, a fairly good singing voice, but little histrionic ability; I presume that her popularity, of which there can be no question, was due to charm of personality.

During her brief starring engagement, she played a number of the lighter rôles in farces and operatic plays, Kate O'Brien in *Perfection* (Charles Paragon, Ludlow; Sir Laurence Paragon, Hubbard) and Catharine in *A Husband at Sight* on her first night; and Diana Vernon in *Rob Roy*, which was followed by *102* (cast not given); Letitia Hardy in *The Belle's Stratagem* to Ludlow's Doricourt, followed by Emily in *Family Fars*; Julia Mannering in *Guy Mannering*, to Smith's Dominic Sampson; Black-Eyed Susan, in the opera of that name, and Eliza in *The Dumb Belle*; Alice in *Love and Reason* and Gertrude in *The Loan of a Lover*; Rosalie in *Town and Country*, with Mat Field in his brother's rôle of Reuben Glenroy, and Maggie McGilpin in *The Highland Reel*, with Ludlow once more successfully essaying a low-comedy rôle, Shelty.²⁷ After this last performance, she slipped down out of stardom to her regular place in the stock company.

It being by now the middle of September, we are arrived at the period not only of equinoctial storms but also of benefits. Mrs. Smith took hers, on the nineteenth, the play being *The Hypocrite*, and the farce, *The Highland Reel*; the attendance, says Ludlow, was good. For one Lambey, *The Gambler's Fate* was resurrected, with Mrs. Smith as Julia and little Marcus as Rose; the program being concluded with *The Mogul Tale*, the beneficiary appearing as Johnny Atkins.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

Mat Field, for his, offered another original drama, written for the occasion, by whom Ludlow does not say; the name of the piece was *Sammy Pumper*. It was followed by the farce of *No, or The Glorious Minority*, and was a financial success. There ensued several more benefits for minor members of the corps, the only feature worthy of mention being an unhappy attempt at Shylock in the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice* by Radcliffe.

Ludlow's benefit, *The Heir at Law*, was the occasion of his wife's return to the stage. It had been decided that her services could not as yet be dispensed with,²⁸ but she had been prevented by illness from participating sooner in the St. Louis season. The bill ended with a melodrama, *Gilderoy* or *The Bonny Boy*, the leads being in the hands of Eliza Petrie and Mat Field. Then came a few more inconsequential benefits, the only novelty being *The Unfinished Gentleman*.

September 28, Mrs. Ludlow took her benefit and made her last appearance on any stage; although she lived twenty-six years thereafter, she never acted again. It was nearly twenty years since she had first appeared behind the footlights with her fiancé. She was at the time a widow, but played under the name of "Miss Wallace."²⁹ Sol Smith, in referring to her farewell to her profession, calls her "a gentlewoman greatly esteemed by all who had the good fortune to know her."³⁰ The composition of the cast of *She Stoops To Conquer*, the comedy of the evening, I derive from Ludlow's account and the advertisement in the *Republican* (September 28), which fortunately complement each other. Mrs. Ludlow made her final bow as Mrs. Hardcastle, her husband playing Young Marlow to the Miss Hardcastle of Mrs. Smith; Tony Lumpkin was played by Radcliffe; Miss Neville, by Miss Petrie. This was followed, according to the advertisement, by a farce, *My Neighbor's Wife* ("FOR THE FIRST TIME HERE"):

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 448.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³⁰ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

Mr. Somerton.....	M. C. Field
Mr. Smith.....	Sol Smith
Mr. Green.....	Charles Green
Mrs. Somerton.....	Mrs. Smith
Mrs. Smith.....	Miss Petrie
Mrs. Green.....	Mrs. Hubbard

Some further benefit performances of familiar pieces occupied the interval before the arrival of the next star, Mrs. Henry Lewis, who went Mrs. Pritchard one better by appearing in several male rôles, according to Ludlow "a series of monstrosities, such as have ever been objects of disgust to me." During the course of her brief sojourn she perpetrated Richard III, William Tell, Virginius (I think the first performance of the part in St. Louis), Othello, Don Juan, in pantomime, and The Wild Boy of Bohemia. Ludlow says there were others, but does not specify what.³¹ She was accompanied by her husband who, says Ludlow, "was a low comedian . . . and in smart and bustling servants generally was not a bad actor." They had both recently come to this country from London, where she had enjoyed some popularity at the Pavilion Theatre, and the summer before had made the first of many appearances at the Park Theatre in New York.³²

As the chill nights of autumn were coming on and the battered doors of the old salt house were about to close forever, there came quietly to St. Louis an actress of a very different type, and the intelligent drama-lovers of the city were offered what was probably the greatest artistic treat of their experience. The newcomer was Mrs. Mary Duff, for years acknowledged by many as the supreme *tragédienne* of the American stage. Fame, which has dealt kindly with her successors, Fanny Kemble and Charlotte Cushman, has passed over this woman. The first love and, later, the sister-in-law of the poet Moore, she had come to this country with her husband in 1810 when but sixteen years of age. For some time he was the more prominent of the two, but suddenly

³¹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

³² Odell, *op. cit.*, IV, 22-23.

her genius revealed itself and after that her recognition was general on this side of the Atlantic.

When St. Louis first saw this remarkable woman, she was at the close of her professional career, but, if competent opinions are to be credited, she had lost none of her power. "Her beauty of face may have somewhat faded," says Ireland, "but her dignity of person and skill in her art had not in the least declined."³³ And again, "Sorrow, sickness, and disappointment had not quelled the fire of her genius."³⁴ Ludlow too is eulogistic. What a pity there remain no accounts of her performances on this occasion! Of these, there were but four, all she could give. She opened October 13 as Adelgitha, and followed this rôle with Annette, in *The Maid and the Magpie*; Isabella, in *The Fatal Marriage*; and Mrs. Haller, in *The Stranger*. If not her greatest, these were among her most popular characters, and the doomed salt house probably witnessed the finest tragic acting of its checkered career. Shortly after this, Mrs. Duff, who had recently married a New Orleans lawyer by the name of Seaver,³⁵ her first husband having died some years earlier, became a devout member of the Methodist church, and apparently sought to obliterate all trace of what she evidently considered a sinful past. So successful was she in concealing herself that it was not till 1874, nearly twenty years after the event, that her death was discovered.

At the very end of the season, Eliza Riddle returned for five nights. Then the curtain thumped down forever and the lights were blown out for good in the salt house. The comedians and would-be tragedians went their ways to Mobile. The doors of the old building were locked for the last time. Four months later it went up in flames.³⁶

³³ Joseph N. Ireland, *Mrs. Duff*, "American Actor Series," No. 3, pp. 124-25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

³⁵ The name is variously spelled. Ireland spells it thus; Ludlow and Wemyss, "Sevier." Her tombstone is nameless.

³⁶ *Mo. Rep.*, February 4, 1837. The article states that it was thought to have been "set on fire designedly."

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST REAL THEATRE, 1837

THE year 1837 stands out as one of the most important in our annals, for it witnessed the opening and the poetical dedication of the New St. Louis Theatre, the first real theatre west of the Mississippi. For nearly twenty years public-spirited citizens had from time to time united with ambitious managers in projects aimed at such a goal, but "nor time, nor [in a sense] place had then adhered," and each project had collapsed under its own weight. But neither the time nor the place was now the same, and, where Turner and Caldwell had failed before them, Ludlow and Smith, working together, succeeded. To Ludlow must unquestionably go the first credit for the happy consummation, inasmuch as he had, with the encouragement of several prominent men, first launched the scheme, months before his partnership with Smith had been arranged. Since he in his book gives the fullest account of the negotiations leading up to the erection of the structure and also the most detailed description of the building itself, I shall once more avail myself of his report, supplementing it with a few other references.

He states that, aided by Col. Meriweather Lewis Clark and Col. Keemle, he "soon succeeded in getting \$30,000. subscribed, the sum to which I proposed to limit the cost of the theatre and ground; for, as I was to pay ten per cent per annum on the entire outlay for building and ground, and to put in the scenery at my own expense, I thought that sum was as much as the probable success of the venture would justify."¹ The site selected was the southeast corner of Third and Olive streets, about a block from the salt house. Lud-

¹ Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, p. 468.

low says that the only objection to the lot was that it might not be large enough. "This objection was afterwards removed, by finding we could purchase of Col. John O'Fallon twenty additional feet adjoining the south side of the lot, at the same rate we had bargained to pay for the sixty feet front from the corner of Olive Street, giving us thus a lot of eighty feet by one hundred and fifty, running back to an alley."² Clark now decided that they should aspire to greater things, and suggested that they get the subscribers to double their subscriptions. After a consultation, although against their better judgment, the partners agreed to this plan. "We found," Ludlow says, "very little trouble in getting the subscribers generally to consent to double their subscriptions; indeed, in a short time we discovered that there had been subscribed over sixty-five thousand dollars, in names of men thought to be good for their amounts."³

Work upon the building was immediately begun under the direction of Alexander Crowl, Ludlow's head carpenter, but was stopped during the winter months. The destruction of the salt house in February rendered the situation serious, and in April Ludlow came posthaste up from Mobile to see whether or not he could rush the work sufficiently to have the theatre ready for the summer season. He says the sight that met his eyes when he reached St. Louis made his heart slide down into his boots, the structure was so far from completion. Nor were matters helped by Crowl's announcement that there were too many large openings for safety in the façade, and that he feared it ought to be torn down and rebuilt. On the advice of an architect, this course was followed, and the new wall remained firmly in place until the building was razed. The manager continues:

On visiting the workshop or paint-room of our scenic artist, Mr. J. R. Smith, I found he had got ready eight pair of "flats" (center-scenes), and with their appropriate "wings" (side scenes). . . . We also had to make arrangements for lighting the house, which had

² *Ibid.*, p. 469.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 469.

to be done by spirit-gas, coal-gas not having at that time been introduced into the city of St. Louis. This lighting was effected by means of branch-lamps suspended around the front of the boxes; the stage having for the "foot-lights" (front lights), square tin boxes, with large burners for spirit gas, a similar kind of box, only of triangular shape, being used behind each wing, with reflectors attached, to throw the light to the centre of the stage.⁴

That this system of illumination was not without its drawbacks, is revealed by Smith in his last book.

Gas had not been introduced into St. Louis at this time, and our oil lamps at the wings had a dangerous way of flaring up in a most unruly manner, occasionally threatening to set fire to the lamp-ladders, and thus endanger the building. The lamps were often "floats" with wick-holders coming up from the bottom, and the oil, when heated, would take fire, and burn up in a large flame. To guard against accidents, we had a tub of water placed on each side of the stage, with a large swab or mop in it ready for use at any moment; and scarcely a night passed without a swabbing being required. The wing hands (subordinate stage-carpenters) were instructed to keep a strict watch over the wing lamps, and to use *the swab* promptly whenever occasion might require. Besides these watches, every actor and actress felt a deep interest in the swabbing process, and it was not an unusual thing to see *Richard the Third*, or *Hamlet*, just before entering upon the stage, catch up a swab and dash it upon the rising flames, which, if not attended to, were likely to burn up the Tower of London, or the royal palace of Elsinore.⁵

Is it any wonder that in those days so many theatres went up in flames?⁶ But, thanks doubtless to these precautions, this one never did. It is obvious from Ludlow's account that the house-lights, those in the auditorium, could not be extinguished and re-lighted at will; consequently they must have burned throughout the evening.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

⁵ Smith, *Theatrical Management*, pp. 199-200.

⁶ James Rees in a "Chronological Table of the Number of Theatres Destroyed by Fire and Accident" on pp. 140-42 of his *The Dramatic Authors of America* names nine structures which had been burned in this country in the forty years preceding the erection of the St. Louis Theatre. He failed to include the old Salt House Theatre in this list. He names nine more in the five years following, and he omits the Government Street Theatre in Mobile, which was destroyed in 1839.

The inside of the theatre was very conveniently arranged, consisting of three tiers or galleries of seats and a parquet. The first tier, or "dress-circle," would seat about three hundred persons; the second tier, or "family-circle," about three hundred and fifty, and the parquet about four hundred. The entrance to the first and second tiers and parquet was through a large vestibule twenty feet in depth by forty in width, thence through three large doors into the lobby of the first tier, which was uncommonly wide. Through the centre of the lobby was the passage to the parquet, and on each side of the lobby a flight of stairs leading to the second tier. The entrance to the gallery was from the centre of the building, to a flight of winding stairs having no connection with the other entrances. [It is certainly fortunate that the oil-lamps never did their worst.] The stage was about forty-five feet in depth, from the front of which to the front of the dress-circle was about fifty feet. The house being designed for a summer theatre, was constructed with a number of very large windows on each side, and the seats in the first and second tiers surrounded with handsome balustrades, turned of cherry wood, which being highly varnished, looked like mahogany. There was a ladies' retiring-room on a level with the first tier, furnished with refreshments and conveniences suited to such visitors. On a level with the second floor was a saloon for gentlemen, furnished with refreshments. Both of these saloons were closed before the conclusion of the season; the first, because a very small proportion of the lady auditors ever visited it, a notion having sprung up among some of the leading ones that their visits to the saloon might be misconstrued, apprehensions that the situation did not necessarily warrant. The gentlemen's saloon was closed because it was found to be an annoyance to the occupants, not only of the second, but of the first tier. There were three large doors opening from the saloon to the *auditorium*, and the loud talking that frequently took place there disturbed many persons who came to hear and enjoy the performance on the stage; so we shut that up before the season terminated.⁷

⁷ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 477-78. Another measure taken in the interest of quiet and order was a refusal to admit women unaccompanied by male escorts to any part of the house, and the strict exclusion of disorderly persons. It would, however, probably be wise not to interpret the term *disorderly* too literally. Disturbances did occur and in his journal Macready refers with some contempt to the conduct of his St. Louis audiences. "Acted Macbeth really well, too well for St. Louis, though the audience were much more decorous, attentive, and appreciative than I have heretofore found them" (April 17, 1844) (Macready's Diaries [ed. by Sir F. Pollock], p. 533).

In Thomas and Wild's rather ornate *Valley of the Mississippi* there appears a very imposing picture of the new theatre, which depicts the façade as ornamented with four large Corinthian columns.⁸ The picture is very fine, but unfortunately largely imaginative. True, the pillars were purchased by Meriweather Lewis Clark; Ludlow says, however, they were never set up, "but remained stored away under the stage of the theatre until the building was sold to the United States government."⁹ An excellent description of the St. Louis Theatre and a typical audience a decade later may be found in the *Saint Louis Weekly Reveille*, edited by Charles Keemle and J. M. Field, December 3, 1848. This article states that the "architectural design" was furnished by Clark. It adds that "when carried out to completion, it will be one of the best constructed and beautiful edifices in our city. . . . In its present unfinished state, it more resembles a huge barn than a temple dedicated to the muses." Sad to say, the structure never was completed.

While the work of construction was under way, the stockholders met at intervals, as we learn from the *Republican*, and the directors strove, apparently with success, to collect the subscriptions. These directors were in addition to Colonel Clark and Colonel Keemle, Joseph C. Laveille, William Hempstead, Edward H. Beebe, and S. M. Wilson. Apparently everything proceeded satisfactorily, and, the prospects being favorable, Ludlow announced the grand opening for his forty-second birthday, July 3. Nor did he have to postpone the event. Yet, he relates:

The opening to our first performance was a matter of "touch and go" with us. The scaffolding that had been used to put up some decorations for the front of the boxes [according to Thomas and Wild, these were in the first two tiers] was being pitched out of side

⁸ Thomas and Wild, *Valley of the Mississippi*, p. 24. The book gives a most elaborate description of the theatre, but inasmuch as it describes its Grecian appearance with the columns in place and in other respects differs widely from Ludlow's more conservative account, I do not quote it here.

⁹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 477.

windows as the audience were coming in at the front doors, that had been opened promptly upon the time advertised.

On Friday, June 23, ten days before the dedication, the company arrived from Mobile, presumably under the guidance of Smith. This company was, on the whole, a comparatively strong one, in certain departments, comedy for instance, decidedly stronger than any which had preceded it. The personnel was given in full in the *Republican* of June 28 and thereafter, the paper now appearing every day. The actors were: Ludlow, Smith, J. M. Field, De Camp, T. Placide, M. Field, Anderson, Hubbard, Anderton, Riley, Barker, Kelly, Jackson, Pearson, Thorpe, Newton, Chambers, Miss Riddle, Miss Petrie, Mrs. Hubbard, Mrs. Salzman (the mother of Miss Petrie and the wife of "the first horn" in the orchestra), Mrs. Kutz, Miss Vogt, and Miss Henning. Vincent De Camp was to serve as stage manager. Mr. and Mrs. Bennie were the principal dancers. J. R. Smith was the chief "scenic artist." And there was an orchestra of nine.

Except for two names omitted here, the list of actors tallies exactly with that given in the *Dramatic Life*, which includes in addition those of West and Fremont.¹⁰ The former was, I believe, an amateur from Mobile who remained on the boards but a short time; the latter had been playing in Cincinnati. The most important recruits were Vincent De Camp and Thomas Placide. I have already alluded to De Camp as a man "who had fallen upon evil days"; perhaps it would have been more tactful to say "who had seen better days." He was a brother of Mrs. Charles Kemble and of Mrs. Frederick Brown, an actress of old women and the mentor of little Miss Meadows. He had a rather cosmopolitan derivation. According to his niece, Fanny Kemble, his father was a captain in the French army, his mother a Swiss. Ludlow, however, asserts that the father was a musician. He adds that he was born "about 1777" and was taken to England at an early age.¹¹ James Murdoch, who as a young man was a member of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 482.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 507.

his company in Columbia, South Carolina, states that he was "a versatile actor of great ability."

Gay and reckless, he was a great favorite in the theatrical circles of Bath, one of the most aristocratic and fashionable provincial towns of England. During his management at Bath he was a boon-companion of many distinguished characters of the heyday period of the Prince Regent (afterward George the Fourth), who was a frequent attendant at the theatre, and to whom the elegant young actor was not personally unknown.¹²

Who would have looked for a beau of Bath in the stage manager of a frontier American theatre? But he had descended by degrees. He had made his American *début* at the Park in New York in 1823,¹³ and had appeared in the metropolis periodically thereafter though not of late years at the chief theatre; but he had never won favor there, possibly because he was too old for some of the parts he played, and his stage management, at the New York Theatre, Bowery, had been likewise condemned.¹⁴ He then established a southern circuit, from which he declined to such positions as he now was filling. Eventually he became an unsuccessful dairy farmer, and died in Houston, Texas, in 1839.¹⁵ Smith says that when he came to St. Louis on this occasion he brought with him "a cargo of turkeys, chickens, ducks, geese, and cabbages," and also some cows and sheep.¹⁶ I have lingered overlong perhaps with De Camp, but such a character in such a setting, I think, is adequate excuse. Tom Placide came of a famous theatrical family long identified with the Charleston, South Carolina, stage, and had by this time—he was about thirty years of age—attained some success as a low comedian, although he never equaled his brother Henry in

¹² James E. Murdoch, *The Stage*, pp. 201-2.

¹³ Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, III, 98.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 335.

¹⁵ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 507. Also, *St. Louis Daily Evening Gazette*, September 7, 1839.

¹⁶ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

ability. The other important members of the corps need no introduction here.

The New St. Louis Theatre was formally dedicated on the evening of July 3, the proceedings being opened by the recitation by J. M. Field of the inevitable prize address. Ludlow and Smith had offered one hundred dollars for a good occasional poem, and this one, by Edward Johnson of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, was selected from the seventeen submitted. "Mr. Johnson," reports Ludlow, "was on that night in St. Louis, on his way farther westward, and went to the theatre, as he said, to ascertain what kind of an address it would be that should obtain the premium, and was unexpectedly and pleasantly surprised to find it to be his own."¹⁷ But I cannot think his delight was without alloy. As Sol Smith's version of the incident is amusing, I shall leave the relation of it to him.

The Prize Address was delivered by J. M. Field to an audience of about *ten people* [one of them the author], who thought it worth their while to go to the theatre in time to see and hear the beginning of the performance. It being summer-time, eight o'clock came only about half an hour after sun-setting; so, as nobody in St. Louis thinks of going to the theatre or any other amusement "before dark," it was all accident that there were a dozen or so of people (all strangers) present at the time advertised for the beginning of the exercises.¹⁸

Perhaps in one respect the tastes of playgoers then were not wholly different from ours. But apparently the tardy citizens, at least the masculine portion, turned out to see the comedy and the farce, and to inspect the new "Temple of Thespis." For the occasion, the managers picked two pieces of assured popularity, *The Honey Moon* and *Simpson & Company*. The complete casts of both are given by Ludlow.¹⁹ Suffice it to say that in the comedy J. M. Field played the Duke Aranza; Placide, the Mock Duke; Mat Field, Rolando; Sol Smith,

¹⁷ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 480.

¹⁸ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

¹⁹ Ludlow, *op. cit.* His account of the season of 1837 is given in chap. xlvi.

Lampedo; Eliza Riddle, Juliana; and Eliza Petrie, Volante. In the farce, De Camp appeared as Simpson, with the younger Field and the two Elizas in the other rôles. Between the two plays, Mr. and Mrs. Bennie danced "the Tambour Major Jig."

No criticism of the events of this important evening is preserved, but, from an editorial in the *Republican* of July 6, we learn that, because "custom had debarred the better half of the community," that is, the ladies, from attending, the house was full but not crowded. "In the opinion of those capable of forming a correct conclusion," observes the writer "the performances were well sustained throughout, and the acting highly creditable to the talent and ability of the company. Several of the performers are already advantageously known in this community, and on their reappearance on Monday evening they were severally greeted by loud, long and repeated cheers from the audience." Taken all in all, not an inauspicious beginning. For this entertainment the following prices were asked (according to Ludlow): "Boxes and parquet, \$1.00; private boxes, \$1.50; all other parts of the house, fifty cents."

The next day being July Fourth, of course the company presented Noah's patriotic *The Plains of Chippewa*, with J. M. Field as Lennox; M. C. Field, Pendragon; Placide, Jerry; Anderson, the Indian Chief; Hubbard, General Scott; De Camp, La Rôle (he was said to be inimitable in French characters); Miss Riddle, Christine; Miss Petrie, Adela. The afterpiece was *The Review*, with De Camp, Caleb Quotem (with songs); Riley (Mrs. Pritchard's final husband), Looney McTwalter; Placide, John Lump; Mrs. Kutz, Grace Gaylove; Miss Petrie, Lucy. Between the two the Bennies repeated their "Tambour Major Jig" and Miss Henning favored with a hornpipe.

The next evening before the popular farce of *The Lottery Ticket*, *Lucille* or *The Story of a Heart* was presented, I think for the first time in St. Louis, with Joe Field, Miss Riddle (to

whom he was by now engaged), and Miss Petrie, who "introduced" "The Banks of the Blue Moselle." In the farce *De Camp* took the part of Wormwood.

The first week came to a close on Saturday with *The Golden Farmer*, performed here, I think, for the first time, with Miss Riddle, Mat Field, Placide, and De Camp. After a *pas de deux* by the Bennies, Joe Field played Jeremy Diddler in *Raising the Wind*.

The following Monday, we find ourselves unexpectedly confronted by a benefit, rather a novelty so early in a season. But, Miss Meadows coming to town under the chaperonage of his sister, De Camp got the managers' permission to have his special performance then in order that he might avail himself of her popularity. The bill was an attractive one and had the added virtue of novelty. It opened with Miss Riddle, Miss Petrie, and the elder Field in *The Soldier's Courtship* (first time), which was followed by *The Four Mowbrays*, of course with Miss Meadows, acting, singing, and dancing. But the *pièce de résistance* of the evening must, I should think, have been the concluding farce, *Monsieur Tonson* with De Camp as Morbleu and Mrs. Brown as Madame Bellegarde. We have no review of their acting on this particular evening, but Murdoch gives an account of the elderly couple as he saw them in these rôles, and from it I shall venture to quote:

The old French gentleman was driven from his home and possessions by the Revolution, and compelled for a living to become a barber and hair-dresser. This character found in De Camp a delineator whose nice appreciation of its peculiar traits came from kindred sentiments and sympathy, while his knowledge of the French language enabled him to give a most ludicrous turn to the inverted and perverted forms of expression in which a Frenchman, strange to our English modes of speech, is apt to give utterance to his thoughts. While sensitively alive to the feelings of the old gentleman, he was brimful of the grotesque humor and traditional fun with which the stage-character abounds. His sister, Mrs. Fred. Brown, played Madame Bellegarde, the housekeeper, who had been a fashionable lady in Paris, and became a fellow refugee when

Morbleu fled for his life; and in the farce they used to dance the *minuet de la cour* with all the grace and elegance of French court-manners.²⁰

The *Republican* (July 12) reports that the house was "literally crowded." Of *Monsieur Tonson* the critic took no notice, but apropos of Miss Meadows he declared that "expectations were more than realized."

Next came *The Wife*, with Eliza Riddle and the Fields, and *A Husband at Sight* performed by Mat Field, De Camp, Mrs. Hubbard, and Miss Petrie—the last-named as "Catharine (with a song)."²¹ Thursday brought another work new to St. Louis, *The Sergeant's Wife*, with De Camp in one of his favorite characters, Cartouche, supported by the Misses Riddle and Petrie, and Placide and Anderson. Mr. Bennie danced (it seems to me a bit inappropriately) a sailor's hornpipe, and then De Camp and Placide appeared in *The Swiss Cottage*, or *Why Don't She Marry?*—"Lisette (with songs) . . . Miss Petrie." Local theatre-lovers were now enjoying a number of novelties. On July 14 they saw *The Two Friends* with Miss Riddle, Miss Petrie, De Camp, and the Fields; Bennie in his "celebrated scene" entitled *Il Studio*; and Smith and Miss Petrie in *The Lying Valet*. The advertisement, in the *Republican* of July 14, of the "first night of" *Jonathan Bradford* or *The Murder of the Road Side Inn* reminds us of that of a stage-feat widely praised a few years ago, when Eugene O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* was mounted. "In the last scene of the first act (when the murder is committed)," it boasts, "the stage is so arranged, that the audience witness the action in front of the Inn, and in FOUR DIFFERENT ROOMS OF THE INN, at the same time." This recalls, too, the hoary platitude that there is nothing new under the sun, or in this case behind the footlights.

In the next bill Ludlow made his season's début as

²⁰ Murdoch, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

²¹ The following casts have all been taken from Ludlow (chap. xlvii) and the *Republican*. It would seem unnecessary to attach a footnote to each one.

Dr. Pangloss in *The Heir at Law*, with Miss Riddle as Cicely, De Camp as Lord Duberly, J. M. Field as Dick Dowlas, and Placide as Zekiel. With it St. Louisans saw another novelty, the farce *One Hour or The Carnival Ball* (Miss Petrie, with songs and a dance, J. M. Field, and Riley) and the inevitable *pas* of the Bennie family. Then came Miss Meadows for another brief engagement, playing Variella in *The Weathercock* and Little Pickle in *The Spoiled Child*; Catharine the Shrew; Albert in *William Tell* and Clara in *Matrimony*; Walter Arlington in *The Idiot Witness* and Kathleen in *The Poor Soldier*; and, for her benefit, Moggy in *The Highland Reel*, Fortunatus Falcone in *The Young Brigand*, "first time here," and once more Little Pickle. In addition to which she sang a number of songs and danced a number of dances. Of her last evening's performance, Ludlow sympathetically exclaims, "Too much work, by far, for so small a body on a hot night in July."

In *The Robber's Wife*, which shared the bill with *Catharine and Petruchio*, Fremont and Newton accomplished their local débuts as Mark Redland and Larry O'Gig, respectively, with what success we shall see presently.

So much for the facts; now for the manner. One feature which renders this inaugural season of particular interest is the activity of the amateur critics, who, shortly after the middle of July, began once more to take a hand in affairs. Some of them, particularly one insuppressible who adopted the pseudonym of "Asmodeus," must have given the managers as well as the actors many a bad half hour. About this time "Old Sol" came down with a bad attack of brain fever, but I doubt if the malady was brought on by these animadversions, however caustic. His illness, whatever its cause, was so serious that the report spread about the country that he had taken his last curtain-call. This he discovered when he went on a short tour to recuperate and also to look up stars.²² But to return to the critics, the first, "Justitia," could not

²² Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 121-22.

wait beyond July 22 for "some person more capable than myself" to take "*proper* notice of the performances at our Theatre," and on that date launched forth on a lengthy but instructive disquisition, parts of which I shall repeat.

Of Eliza Riddle, with whom he began, he said, "she has in general 'played well her part,' and fulfilled public expectation; yet, in a few instances she was not herself." By this rather unfortunate phrase, he meant to hint at no impropriety in her deportment, which was invariably above reproach, except, according to Smith, for an unwillingness to exert herself to study new rôles,²³ but to observe that she was not suited to such a part as that of Cicely Homesun. "On that occasion," he reported, "her voice seemed harsh, and the whole character unsuited to her genius."

I would advise her to reserve herself for characters of higher order, as was nature's first design. I cannot say too much for her, in the very chaste style in which she presents some of the deepest scenes of tragic import, and would refer particularly to her "Rose Redland," on Wednesday night last, in the Robber's Wife. Nothing could be more perfect than her conception of the character and its masterly execution. I consider it one of her best efforts—and in fact—to *life—to life*.

I wish I could say as much for Mr. Fremont on that occasion, who *attempted* to personate "Mark Redland." He modulated his voice in such a manner in the first part of the play that no one scarcely could hear him. In the latter part, he worked himself up to the highest pitch and tore everything into tatters. Such ranting—such cutting—such slashing, and such sawing of the air is in very bad taste,—in fact, disgusting and not to be endured. I would advise him to save his long timber, he may need all he has before he gets through the work before him; and to be more temperate in the use of his harsh voice and slender arms.²⁴

To Fremont's fellow-debutant, Newton, "Justitia" was kinder, observing that he "acquitted himself admirably." The brothers Field came in for commendation, but he thinks

²³ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 20, 1837, Smith Collection.

²⁴ *Mo. Rep.*, July 22, 1837.

Mat's person would have been better suited to Julian St. Pierre in *The Wife* than was Joe's.

Miss Petrie does considerable justice to her characters, but does not always "sing like a nightingale." . . . Of Miss Meadows, I hardly know what to say. She is certainly a very interesting little girl when in character, but I am sorry to find her attempt, and the audience to tolerate such casts by the Managers, as place her altogether out of her proper line. Her "*Four Mowbrays*" and "*Little Pickle*," as also her dancing, is [*sic*] excellent. Her singing, for one of her age, is very good, except the attempt to sing "*Rise Gentle Morn*," which was bad. As to her personation of Catharine to Mr. Anderson's *Petruchio*, it was so out of character as to be absolutely a horrible representation, and amounting to a complete burlesque of one of Shakespear's best efforts.—To the charming little fairy, I would say, "Keep near shore," and attempt only characters suited to your age and person.

The highest praise was reserved for Placide, who "is always at home, and, in fact, contributes as much or more than any other individual to the amusement of the houses, by his just delineation of low comic characters." After advising the management to lay matting in the corridors, "Justitia" closed his review with this admonition: "To the audience I say, adhere to good order, and point your finger of scorn and disapprobation at him who dares infringe upon the strict rules of courtesy [*sic*]."

That "Justitia" was not the only one bursting with gratuitous advice is evidenced by the editor's mild remark in the same issue that he "cannot pretend to keep up with all that are sent on this subject." Someone—it would appear to be this editor—after saying that the house "was crowded to excess in every part" and that "much the largest assemblage, we have seen, since the opening of the Theatre, was present on this occasion," deplored a practice, then in vogue, of showering juvenile performers with coins as "in bad taste and humiliating to one of the mature conceptions of Miss M."

The first Shakespearean piece of the summer was the ever welcome *Richard III* with the following cast: Richard III,

J. M. Field; Richmond, M. C. Field; King Henry VI, De Camp; Queen Elizabeth, Miss Riddle; Lady Anne, Miss Petrie. One wonders how De Camp fared as the hapless monarch; he was of nearly the right age, but could he help being funny? Evidently the gibes of "Justitia" did not frighten Fremont from the scene, for on the next evening (July 26) he again appeared as Mark Redland in *The Robber's Wife*, which was followed by a new ballet pantomime "got up under the direction of Mr. Bennie, called the CAMP—or *The night before the battle*" and the popular farce of *One Hour* with J. M. Field and Miss Petrie "with songs and a dance." Two nights later another new farce, *The Handsome Husband*, was brought out with the two Elizas and the two Fields; I note it, not because it is important, but to keep the record complete.

On July 26 "Asmodeus" first revealed his presence, but, despite the employment of many poetical words, contented himself with firing two shafts, one at the recent "burlesque" of *Catharine and Petruchio*, the other at the orchestra, which "maugre the loud and vigorous stamping of its leader, the paucity of wind instruments, and the ill-timed 'staring' of sundry tyros on the drum, has perhaps sustained (though it certainly has not added to) *the great fame* which he had heard awarded to it." Two days later he had more to say.

The "ballet" was pretty well got up, and may serve as an amusing interlude. Mr. and Mrs. Bennie, if they should not gain the crown of Terpsichore, at least deserve our thanks for the several names given to their *dance*. Without them, *Asmodeus* would certainly have been at a loss to discover any *variety* in their performance.

"Asmodeus" closed this communication with a few hints to the managers.

. . . . Can the worthy managers point out to him, the good taste displayed in the introduction of what are most appropriately termed "*Tormentors*"? Is the entree or exit of an actor through a creaking door in strict keeping with a forest scene? Or doth the charming melody of noisy hinges sound in unison with the traveler's stealthy step through the woodland?

Two days later the editor was appealing for mercy. He expostulated:

CORRESPONDENTS—Gentlemen, just stand back and give us room! We have now on our table, nine communications on the subject of the Theatre, all sent to us within the two days last past. . . . And such a compound of eulogies, complaints, admiration and approvals as they present! We would as soon attempt a description of Pandora's box, as decipher the half of them.

On July 29 there was a new farce, *PP* or *The Man and the Tiger*. At least it was advertised for that day. Those involved in the presentation were Miss Petrie, Placide, and Joe Field. The next week the last-named young man returned to "the higher walks of the drama" and devoted his attention impartially to tragedy, comedy, and opera. The plays were old favorites, but the casts exhibit some changes which may be of interest. In *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*, on July 31, J. M. Field was the Sir Giles; his brother, the Wellborn; De Camp, the Justice Greedy; Placide, the Marall; and Miss Riddle, the Margaret. The tragedy was followed by *Borrowed Feathers*, with Placide as Tom Tray and Miss Petrie as Lucy Lavender. Unfortunately the performance of the Massinger work called forth the ire of "Asmodeus," who exclaimed two days later:

Again was the performance of Monday evening marred by the "gagging" of one or two proteges of the managers, Asmodeus entered the Theatre with the purpose of forming an opinion of Field's "Sir Giles Overreach"; but it was impossible. As well might he attempt to criticize the performance of a Paganini, when accompanied by the music of a hand organ.

The first comedy in which J. M. Field displayed his talents for acting of this sort was Mrs. Inchbald's popular *Wives as They Were, and Maids as They Are*, a revival, in which he played Bronzely; De Camp, Lord Priorly; Mat Field, Sir William Dorillon; Eliza Riddle, Miss Dorillon; and Eliza Petrie, Lady Mary Raffle. For his benefit (August 4) he chose a Farquhar comedy, *The Inconstant*, the first, I think,

by this popular author to be seen in St. Louis, "revised and altered to suit the taste of the present day." It is certain that no St. Louis audience "of the present day" would have been seen patronizing Farquhar "unrevised." The casts of the complete bill were given as follows in the *Republican* of the same day: *The Inconstant*: Young Mirabel, J. M. Field; Old Mirabel, De Camp; Duretete, Placide; Dugard, M. C. Field; Petit, Fremont; Bizarre, Miss Riddle; Orianna, Miss Petrie; and 33 *John Street*: Mr. Thomas Tompkins, J. M. Field; Sir Charles Crazy, M. C. Field; Lady Crazy, Miss Petrie. For her evening (August 9) Miss Riddle, perhaps to please her fiancé who wished to appear with her in the play, selected *Much Ado about Nothing*; and on this occasion she, and not Mrs. Smith, was the Beatrice to Joe Field's Benedick. Claudio was intrusted to Mat Field, Hero to Miss Petrie, and Dogberry to De Camp. This performance, too, apparently passed without journalistic approval or disapproval, and Ludlow also ignores it. One more comedy staged at this period calls for mention, O'Keeffe's *Wild Oats* with J. M. Field as Rover, De Camp as Sir George Thunder, M. C. Field as Ephraim Smooth, Placide as Sim, Eliza Riddle as Lady Amaranth, and Eliza Petrie as Jenny Gammon.

But tragedies and comedies, with their attendant farces, had not occupied the entire time of the versatile *corps dramatique*. Apparently there was nothing of which they were afraid, for they also ventured upon grand operas. Imagine a performance of *Aida* or *Madame Butterfly* by one of our present-day provincial stock companies. The idea is one not easily, or pleasantly, grasped. Yet Ludlow and Smith were not, in this respect, at least, more daring than their confrères. Of course, as Dr. Odell points out, actors probably sang better in those days than they do now. The declamatory style of acting required for the interpretation of the popular tragedies certainly tended to develop better voices than does our staccato and supposedly realistic dialogue. But, even at that, I very much doubt if Auber's *Masaniello*, which was

given on August 3, fared much better at the hands, or perhaps I should say in the throats, of the St. Louis comedians than would, say, *Madame Butterfly*, if essayed by some stock company today. *Masaniello* or *The Dumb Girl of Portici* had to offer as attractions, not only its tuneful music, but also in its plot the happy combination of a deaf-mute, several bandits or smugglers, and a volcano in violent eruption. Miss Petrie, for once without a song, was the speechless Fenella; Joe Field, the *Masaniello*; Placide, the Giuseppe. As on the occasion of the opera's local *première* twelve years before, when the lamented Jane Placide was the Fenella, it was followed by *Simpson & Company*. Whatever may have been the quality of the performance, it was evidently a success, as it was immediately repeated twice. For enlightenment concerning it, we must rely upon "Asmodeus," who we find had something of a modern point of view. He complains, as usual in the third person:

It seems a strange anomaly to him, that in a piece requiring a considerable quota of vocal talent to give it effect, the only person who lays any claim to possession of vocal powers in the company performing it should enact the Dumb Girl. With the small exception of the want of a good singer as "*Masaniello*," and the total absence of anything like a full chorus, the piece went off pretty well. 'Tis true that some of Fenella's motions required considerable attention, and a little explanation to render them intelligible."

He ends his rather depressed and depressing review with the admission that the scenery was "well got up" and that the "artist deserves much credit."²⁵

But one opera did not satisfy the ambitions of Ludlow, who was now alone at the helm, Smith having departed on his journey in quest of health and stars. One week later he mounted *Der Freischütz*, designated in the advertisement (August 10) as "the grand mystical Drama, with the original music of Von Weber." I have nevertheless a shrewd suspicion that some of the "original music" was cut. Joe Field,

²⁵ *Mo. Rep.*, August 8, 1837.

who had warbled the tenor airs of Masaniello, now obligingly assumed the bass, or baritone, rôle of Casper. I am not familiar with the version of the opera presented, and it is possible that the music had already been transposed, just as the names of some of the characters had been altered. I presume that the Adolphe performed by Mat Field was the hero known as Max at the Metropolitan today, and no doubt the Rose of Miss Petrie, once more "with songs," was Agathe. Placide as Killian is the only other performer mentioned in the advertisement. Again the operatic experiment appears to have been attended with success. Although I have found advertisements for but two performances, Ludlow states that it was given "a considerable number of nights, to crowded houses" and adds that the music was given very respectably. But otherwise thought "Asmodeus" whose comment on the opera is perhaps his most caustic. "Now that it is finished, he will merely say, that the scenery alone rendered it endurable." On the second night, proceedings were enlivened by the presence in the theatre of a band of Sioux Indian chiefs who, according to Ludlow, were greatly alarmed by what took place before their astonished eyes, and were with difficulty prevented from stampeding.

In the enchantment scene, where the flames flashed up from the earth, the "wild host" rushed through the air, the moon turned blood-red, thunder rolled and lightning flashed, figures of the dead in their shrouds appeared, doleful groans and piercing shrieks were heard, and meteors flitted through the air, these Indian chiefs became greatly excited, and sprang to their feet, making an attempt to leave their seats, apparently quite alarmed, and would have gone out, had not Col. Pilcher detained them by a rapid explanation.²⁶

Who would blame them—in that theatre and with those exits?

Let us now, for the time being, leave the senior member of the firm at the wheel, and follow the junior to Louisville and

²⁶ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

Cincinnati, whither he had gone, not only to recuperate his strength, but also to engage stars for the coming weeks. From the former city he wrote Ludlow on August 7 that it was "reported currently" that he was dead. In his biography he reports that "Mrs. Fanny Drake," on finding him alive, nearly crushed him with "affectionate embraces." But the tragedy queen's delight and his gratification at her relief did not prevent the two old friends from doing some close bargaining with each other. The terms agreed on were that she was to play a week, "dividing after \$1,800" (that is, she was to get half the proceeds after \$1,800 had been deducted for expenses)—and a half benefit, "provided that our share on the benefit night shall not be less than \$300.—If anything should happen that she should not be in time for Monday, she is to begin on Tuesday, and play 5 nights—dividing after \$1,500."²⁷ "I think," he adds, "Mother Drake will do—I couldn't make better terms with the old critter. She *says* she will leave what she makes to go on the notes she owes me—if she does, of course don't refuse it—but I'm very certain she won't. I am better—much—but weak as a cat, and my head buzzes, but don't ache." The Louisville theatres, of which at that time there were two in operation, were "doing nothing at all—both down to *half price*—and \$100 is a great house."

From Louisville "Old Sol" betook himself to Cincinnati, where he arrived "just in time to 'stop the press' of my old friend and brother typo, John H. Wood, who had prepared an elaborate obituary notice, a column long,"²⁸ and to prevent the proprietors of the theatre from putting the house in mourning. Here he engaged two more celebrities, Master Burke, another prodigy, and Parsons, the tragedian. He wrote:

Probably they may play alternate nights, which will be better for us, as it will relieve the monotony of tragedy every night.—I

²⁷ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, August 7, 1837, Smith Collection.

²⁸ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

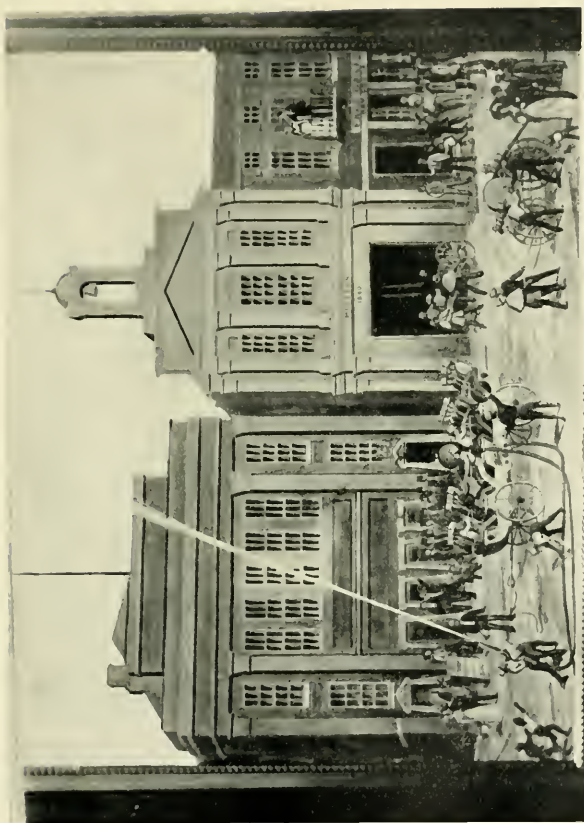
really think Parsons, with his elephant figure and splendid dresses, and new tragedies will make a hit—he is as good an actor as Adams [*sic*], and a majority of the people will be glad to see some of those Plays which we cannot do with our Stock Company. I hope [he goes on later] you will approve of my engt. of Parsons. He has all the parts of his new pieces written off regularly and his “Caius Silius”²⁹ (tho a monstrous tissue of plagiarisms from beginning to end) is quite effective and “Gladiator”ical—and his Indian pieces they say are very “Metamora”cal.³⁰—So that the St. Louisonians will have a taste of the sublime—and a touch of Forest [*sic*] at the same time—for Parsons grunts and growls exactly like Forest—more exactly if possible than Gus Adams.³¹

In pursuance of her agreement with Smith, Mrs. Drake came to St. Louis in time to open on Tuesday, not Monday, in *Adelgitha* or *The Fruits of a Single Error*, her support including Anderson and the two Fields. Her next appearance was as Madame Clermont in *Adrian and Orilla*, with Miss Riddle as Lothair, Joe Field as Adrian, Mat Field as Altenberg, De Camp as Rosenheim, and Placide as Michael; Miss Petrie as Orilla, Mrs. Salzman as Githa, and Mrs. Hubbard as Minna. On Thursday Mrs. Drake played Evadne in Sheil’s tragedy of that name, Joe Field, Ludovico. In Rowe’s *Jane Shore* on Friday she assumed, not the title rôle, but the equally strong one of Alicia, the villainess. Of course Jane fell to the lot of Eliza Riddle, Gloster to Anderson, Hastings to Joe Field, and Dumont to Mat Field. On the last night of her regular engagement she was Marguerite in *La Tour de Nesle*, with Joe Field as Buridan. But by all odds her most interesting performance was saved for her benefit, when she played Lady Macbeth, to the Macbeth of Joe Field, and with Mat Field as Macduff, Anderson as Banquo, and De Camp as Hecate! After it, she appeared in *The Wedding Day* as Lady Contest (somewhat of a descent, one would say), and

²⁹ Parsons emulated the example of Forrest in offering a prize for a tragedy. This one by N. H. Bannister was the winner.

³⁰ *The Gladiator*, by Robert Montgomery Bird, and *Metamora*, by John Augustus Stone, were two of Forrest’s most popular pieces.

³¹ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, August 11, 1837, Smith Collection.



NEW ST. LOUIS THEATRE (LUDLOW AND SMITH)
(From a water color by Mat Hastings in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society)

concluded, Ludlow says, with a recitation, "The Scolding Wife Reclaimed." This was, unless I am mistaken, the last time St. Louis had the pleasure of acclaiming this favorite and gifted actress.

Frances Ann Drake was now, according to Ludlow, approaching her fortieth birthday.³² Although still a young woman, she had apparently passed the zenith of her powers, and, younger and more brilliantly endowed *tragédiennes* coming to the fore, she remarried and retired for a time to private life. She had been, if not a great, shall we say a "near-great," actress and had succeeded in filling a position of great prominence in the American theatre and in retaining the respect of the public. Although she looks a bit dour in her most familiar picture, Cowell asserts that she was "a most joyous, affable creature, full of conundrums and good nature."³³ For an account of her last visit to St. Louis, I shall turn to the papers. On August 17 the *Republican* in a brief editorial note observed that she was a great favorite but had not drawn a full house, and added gallantly that time had made "but little if any perceptible change" in her person. "Asmodeus" was, as usual, less reticent. Writing the next day, he says of her Adelgitha:

Her delineation . . . is not as powerful and effective as it was a few years ago. Time, which works its changes on all, has impaired her ability to impart to her "Adelgitha" the deep interest and admiration which it once commanded. We may admire it as a piece of *acting*, but are never charmed into forgetting that it is *acting only*. She does not look the character, that fact alone, is sufficient to mar the effect of its representation.

But in *Adrian and Orilla*, he found her better.

In "Mme. Clermont" the effect of Mrs. Drake's efforts was complete. The decided, though not rude, applause, and the tears of the female, aye, and several of the male portion of the audience,

³² Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

³³ Joe Cowell, *Thirty Years Passed among the Players of England and America*, p. 86.

shewed far more than can the pen of "Asmodeus," that she is still, in some walks of the Drama, unrivalled.

Mrs. Drake was succeeded by Joseph Burke, famed for the past seven years as an infant prodigy, but now nearly twenty years of age, and so scarcely any longer in that category. After his début at the Park Theatre in 1830, his popularity, amounting almost to a craze, had swept the country, his vogue resembling nothing so much as that of Master Betty in London earlier in the century. But, now that he was reaching manhood, his appeal was on the decline. His acting, as a child, had been remarkable; now its distinction was gone. But he became an excellent musician, especially as a violinist, and gradually he allowed this talent to displace the other. While still a young man, he retired from the stage, and in later years apparently tried to forget that he had ever had any connection with it.³⁴ He opened his St. Louis engagement as Romeo to the Juliet of Eliza Riddle, and with Ludlow as Mercutio, Mrs. Salzman as the Nurse, and Placide as Peter. He also took part in the afterpiece, *The Irish Tutor*, a farce in which he performed Terry O'Rourke alias Doctor O'Toole. On his second night, the play was Morton's "good old comedy" *Speed the Plough*, not seen in St. Louis in years, and he was the Sir Abel Handy. "Between the Play and Farce," announced the advertisement in the *Republican* (August 23), "MASTER BURKE will perform a CONCERTO on the VIOLIN; composed by De Beriot, with orchestral accompaniments." That not being enough for one evening, he performed six characters in *A Day after the Fair*. There followed *John Bull*, in which he enacted Dennis Bulgruddery; *The Irish Ambassador*, in which he appeared as Sir Patrick O'Plenipo; *The Prize* or 2, 5, 3, 8, in which he was Doctor Lenitive; and finally, crowning feature of all, *The School for Scandal* with "the wonderful boy" (that was) in the rôle of Sir Peter Teazle! He had also taken part in various and sundry farces, danced hornpipes, sung Irish songs, played his

³⁴ H. P. Phelps, *Players of a Century*, p. 155.

violin, and composed an overture *ex tempore* on the stage! Small wonder he drew crowded houses!³⁵ But there was at least one individual who sang in discord—the vigilant “Asmodeus,” who expressed himself in the *Republican* of August 26.

His “Romeo” is a passable affair. There are at least two, if not three of the members of the present stock company who can fill this part, with superior effect. . . . In “Sir Abel Handy” he succeeded no better. His walk lacked the decrepitude and his voice the tremulous expression of age. Had some actor, not a “Star,” have acted the part so tamely, he would most assuredly have been hissed. In short, his personation of the two characters mentioned, as well as that of “Dennis Bulgruddery” was flat, very flat. His Dr. O’Toole is something better. His first appearance, drew a very full house; but on his second and third it was by no means crowded.

“Asmodeus” added, however, that “with a foresight highly commendable, he is devoting his chief attention to music,” and that “his performances on the violin give evidence of a master hand and ear.” His Sir Peter Teazle was found to be surprisingly better. Information concerning his support in the Sheridan satire has been gleaned in part from Ludlow, in part from the newspaper advertisement, and in part from the review of “Asmodeus.” Upon one point, there is a discrepancy. Ludlow says he played Charles, whereas the advertisement assigns the rôle to Anderson. “Asmodeus,” unfortunately, missed his opportunity to play referee. The critic said that for once De Camp “was somewhat natural, and did not over-act his part.” Of Mat Field he said that his “peculiar forte seems to lay [*sic*] in Comedy; witness his booby character of Friday evening, and his Sir Benj. Backbite of Monday. In the first how natural, in the last how facetious!”

Before the departure of the quondam prodigy, who had his benefit August 30, Charles Booth Parsons put in his appearance, and filled an engagement of something over a week, his last, Ludlow thinks, on the St. Louis stage. Shortly afterward he withdrew from the theatrical profession to enter the

³⁵ *Mo. Rep.*, August 25, 1837.

ministry. After a year or so he resumed his former occupation but only long enough to prepare himself more adequately to fill his new one, and he ultimately became a prominent, if somewhat "stagey," Methodist clergyman, in Louisville. During his final theatrical engagement in St. Louis he ran through his usual repertory of tragedies, *Damon and Pythias*, *Caius Silius*, *Oranaska*, *Brutus* or *The Fall of Tarquin*, *Othello*, and for his benefit, *Rienzi*, *The Last of the Tribunes*, a drama based, of course, on Bulwer-Lytton's novel. He does not seem to have been a very great success. Ludlow says that in *Caius Silius*, which had been written expressly for him, there was only one character of the slightest interest, and that he was not big enough, artistically, to fill it adequately. One remark of the manager's puzzles me. He says of his *Brutus*, "Mr. Parsons could not satisfy an audience who had but a short time before seen J. B. Booth, Sr. perform this character."³⁶ I believe he has fallen into his old habit of mixing his dates, for if the famous tragedian had at that time ever played in St. Louis, he had left behind him no trace that I have been able to discover. "Asmodeus," on the last day of the month, said of his *Damon* that

his personation of the character, cannot be classed as first rate; and if it be considered his *chef d'oeuvre*, can hardly entitle him to the grade of a respectable second. His commanding person and voice are suited to the part; but in several of the scenes, he was greatly deficient in expression. His style of acting in the Senate scene, may be original; but it appeared to thy friend, an imperfect imitation of another actor, whose "*Damon*" at this day cannot be equalled.

The star was moreover indifferently supported by the stock company, especially as Eliza Riddle's illness, to which she succumbed after appearing in the first two tragedies, compelled Eliza Petrie to assume a number of rôles for which she was by nature unsuited, *Tarquinius*, *Virginia*, and *Desdemona*. Ludlow pays the young woman a sincere tribute. "The *Virginia* of the evening was Miss Petrie, again out of

³⁶ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

her element; but she was a good and kind-hearted young lady, very considerate and obliging, and ready to sacrifice her own feelings to relieve a friend in trouble. Blessed be her memory! She was a good and true woman." In *Othello* J. M. Field was the Iago, a part previously filled by his brother when he himself played the Moor. Mat Field was the Pythias to Parsons' Damon.

At this point I had, perhaps, better mention a few of the recent afterpieces. After *Damon and Pythias*, Parsons descended to comedy, playing Charles II (in the Irving-Payne *opus*) to the Captain Copp of Sol Smith and the Mary of Miss Petrie. After *Caius Silius* Joe Field acted Puff in Sheridan's *The Critic*, not seen in the city in many years. The only other farce which calls for particular mention was *Three and the Deuce* with Sol Smith once more as the Three Singles.

On the last night of the month, at Burke's benefit, there burst out one of those periodical disorders which rendered theatregoing at that time a somewhat ticklish diversion, and which even the watchfulness of Ludlow and Smith could not entirely prevent. On this occasion, it was caused by adherents of the Bennie family, who, after "holding up the show" in their efforts to force an encore of the *pas de deux* and being silenced by Smith, hissed the popular *ingénue* from the stage when she came on for her part. Such confusion then arose that the manager had again to appear before order could be restored.³⁷ On the occasion of the injured lady's benefit the theatregoing public evidently made a particular effort to demonstrate their loyalty and affection. The *Republican* (September 4) reports that the

house was jammed full. There were ladies, women and girls in rows, and there were gentlemen old and young, some boys, a few dandies and some few rowdies. There was a pleasant feeling in the crowd which imparted its influence to all the actors and rendered the entertainments of the evening spirited and quite interesting. . . . During the performance of the opera, a wreath of flowers,

³⁷ *Mo. Rep.*, September 1, 1837.

containing an elegant gold chain, valued at more than \$100, was thrown on the stage and placed upon her brow.

The opera was *Brother and Sister* in which she essayed the rôle last sung in St. Louis by Mme Pearman.

The stars now "went out," apparently to the relief of the editor of the *Republican*, who expressed the hope that some of the regular members of the corps, particularly Joe Field, might now be allowed to show their mettle, and promised full houses whenever either of the managers would take part.³⁸ But the "starless nights" were few, in fact none, if we include in the category of stars one Signor Vivalla, "the wonder of the world," an acrobat, whose feats added to the joys of three (Ludlow says four) evenings, on one of which he followed a repetition of *Masaniello*. On September 12 the ever welcome Mrs. Pritchard returned to play seven nights and, as it happened, to bid St. Louis a final farewell. Her engagement had the spice of novelty in that she displayed herself in new characters. The first was Elvira, in *Pizarro*, instead of Rolla, a part now assigned to Joe Field, while Miss Petrie, Mat Field, and Anderson filled the other important rôles. Perhaps the most interesting of the new pieces was a dramatization of *The Heart of Midlothian*, in which the rôle of Madge Wildfire must have given her excellent scope for the display of her powers. Miss Riddle was the Jeanie, and Miss Petrie, the Effie Deans, and Joe Field played Geordie Robertson, a character in which, I should think, his brother would have looked better. On this evening two serious plays were offered, the second being *The Brigand*, in which the star performed Alessandro Massaroni, another male part, and Miss Petrie, Ottavia. Mrs. Pritchard next turned her attention to the domestic drama, appearing in the local *première* of *Woman's Life* or *The Girl, the Wife, and the Mother*. She played the rôle of Isabelle, and her support included Miss Petrie as Sophie, J. M. Field as Eugene, M. C. Field as Scipio, Placide as Andrew, and Riley as Apollo. The after-

³⁸ *Ibid.*, September 9, 1837.

piece, in which she also took part, was *Hunting a Turtle*. In another novelty, *Wallace* or *The Scottish Chiefs*, she acted Marian to the Wallace of the elder Field; and after the drama Ludlow made one of his rare appearances, as Nipperkin in *Sprigs of Laurel*. On the last night of her engagement, she put to good use the current popularity of *Masaniello* and played the dumb girl after a repetition of *Woman's Life*; and for her benefit once more donned male attire as *Alberto Contarini* or *The Bandit of the Abruzzi*, but returned to her proper sphere in the afterpiece, this time *Wallace*. I should say that her evening, indeed her entire week, must have been arduous. After it she disappeared forever from the St. Louis stage, and shortly thereafter died in Texas.

The rest of the month was dedicated for the most part to the benefits of the lesser members of the company. Little of great consequence occurred. *Ellen Wareham* was revived for the benefit of Alexander Crowl, "Architect and Master Builder of the St. Louis Theatre," with Miss Riddle as "the wife of two husbands." So was *Der Freischütz* in the course of which, rather inappropriately it would seem, Miss Henning executed a Scotch fling. Miss Riddle also filled the leading rôle of Sheridan Knowles' *The Wrecker's Daughter*, then seen in the city for the first time. An interesting bill must have been that offered for Riley's benefit, when Ludlow and De Camp appeared together, as Young Wilding and Papillon, in *The Liar*, with Mrs. Fremont as Miss Godfrey; and Sol Smith and Placide amused the audience in the title rôles of *The Two Gregories*. Not so enjoyable, if "Asmodeus" is to be credited, was the performance of *Henry IV* on De Camp's night. De Camp himself played Falstaff; Joe Field, Prince Hal; Mat Field, Hotspur; Anderson, the King; and Mrs. Salzman, Dame Quickly. The critic reports that it was "a sorry affair" and that, badly as it was cut, "the quantity was sufficient for the manner in which it was given." But, he asks, what could be expected after "a single, hurried rehearsal"?³⁹

³⁹ *Ibid.*, October 2, 1837.

On September 30, however, the management won the approval of their anonymous castigator with a worthy production of a piece called *East and West*, which he describes as a dramatization of "a little work which appeared about the time of the agitation of the Nullification question . . . entitled 'The Yankee among the Nullifiers, an Autobiography,' dedicated to the Hon. Tristan Burgess." In the same article in which he expressed his opinion of the *Henry IV* fiasco, he lauds both this play and its presentation, although he cannot resist the temptation to call attention to the fact that it had been accorded three weeks of preparation, whereas the Shakespearian play had been run off after one single rehearsal. He also remarks that many of the audience left the theatre irate at what they took to be reflections cast on the southern people. But he liked the show.

October was in the main a musical month. It was ushered in, apparently rather unexpectedly, by a joint engagement of two singers, Mrs. Bailey, who as Charlotte Watson had eloped with the great Paganini and been romantically rescued by her father, and an English tenor by the name of Plumer. Both were well known and popular in the East. I say that their engagement seems to have been unexpected, because for their opening night another play without either of them in it was advertised in the press, and furthermore because it was stated in the paper that they had arrived unsolicited. Ludlow says they made their débuts in *Guy Mannering*, Monday, October 2, and *The Devil's Bridge*, the next evening, was advertised as their second night. This old favorite was followed by the comic opera *John of Paris* (John of Paris, Plumer; Vincent, Miss Petrie; Grand Chamberlain, De Camp; Pedrigo Potes, Placide; Princess of Navarre, Mrs. Bailey) and *Charles II* and *No Song, No Supper*. The *Marriage of Figaro* deserves particular mention. Plumer, who in New York had sung Count Almaviva, a baritone rôle, now turned that over to Joe Field, who, so far as voice was concerned, was little of anything, and assumed the

basso part of Figaro. Mrs. Bailey herself sang Susanna; Miss Petrie, the page Cherubino; and Placide, Antonio. All things considered, it must have been a distressing performance; after it was over the prima donna appeared with Placide and De Camp in *The Swiss Cottage*. They closed their week October 7 in *John of Paris* and *Clari, the Maid of Milan*. On the whole this surprise engagement can scarcely be listed among the successes of the season. But it led to a grand engagement of another sort.

I said above that the month of October was in the "Temple of Thespis" mainly musical. The adjective may, however, in this case have been a trifle euphemistic, for two things which seem to have been conspicuously absent were dulcet notes and close harmony. I remarked, too, that the contributions of Plumer and Mrs. Bailey left something to be desired. The former was hoarse with a very bad cold; for the latter's ineffectiveness there were other explanations. Everything else, however, was dwarfed in importance by the great event of October 9, an event toward which, presumably, the management had been straining for the past several weeks and to which the theatre-loving inhabitants were apparently looking forward with keen anticipation. This was to be the production, for the first time in St. Louis, of the opera *Cinderella* which had created something of a sensation in the East and seven years before had enjoyed no less than fifty performances at the Park Theatre in New York. It had after that been essayed by various other companies throughout the land, and during the winter season just past had been mounted with great éclat by Ludlow and Smith in Mobile. Now its splendors were to be spread before the eyes—under the circumstances I hesitate to say the ears—of the delighted St. Louisans. The opera was ostensibly Rossini's, and in a sense it was his, the music being entirely of his composition; it was not, however, his *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*), but, in the words of Dr. Odell, it was "an English adaptation by Rophino Lacy," and the advertisements of the first day

. . . . announced that the music by Rossini was selected from *Cenerentola*, *Armida*, *Maometto*, and *Guillaume Tell*.”⁴⁰ Apparently its greatest charm lay, not in the music, but in the opportunities it afforded the scene painter for a prodigal display of his art.

The day before the *première*, “Old Sol” dashed off a hurried letter to a business acquaintance in Mobile, a part of which bears on the subject in hand.

Our season closes, in 3 weeks from last night. Mrs. Baily [*sic*] (late Miss Watson) and Mr. Plumer (vocalists) have been playing during the last week—and tried hard (thro’ the Press etc.) to *force an engagement* for *Cinderella*. Plumer is hoarse, and Mrs. B. is 7 months *gone with child*—is as big as a small hogshead! It was no go—L & S are the hardest “colts” to force into measures that could be picked out—prehaps [*sic*]! We couldn’t be persuaded to displace little Pete *no way no how*. Joe Field does the Prince, and your humble servant Dandini—I was willing to retire and let Mr. P. do the Prince—(or Dandini)—and even went so far as to offer Mrs. B. the Fairy Queen but it was *Cinderella* or nothing with her—So we do the piece by ourselves, as we ought.⁴¹

The battle in the press to which Smith referred was a furious one in which the writers, both pro-Bailey and anti-Bailey waxed, not only eloquent, but exceedingly frank as well.⁴² But the managers stood their ground, agreeing with the editor of the *Republican* that the star was not “in a situation ‘to hold the mirror up to Nature’ as *Cinderella*,” and Eliza Petrie retained her hold on the coveted rôle.

CINDERELLA

Cinderella	Miss Petrie
Prince Felix	Mr. J. M. Field
Dandini	Mr. Sol Smith
The Fairy Queen	Miss Henning
Baron Pompolino	Mr. De Camp
Pedro	Mr. Placide

⁴⁰ Odell, *op. cit.*, III, 497.

⁴¹ Sol Smith to Richard Corre, October 8, 1837, Smith Collection.

⁴² *Mo. Rep.*, October 5, 6, 9, 10, 1837.

My make-up of this cast is based on the advertisement in the *Republican* of the day of the *première* (October 9) and assertions in the books of both the managers that the cast was almost identical with that employed in Mobile, the only important changes being the promotion of Joe Field to the rôle of the Prince, the assumption of Dandini by Smith himself, and, as we learn from a later paper, the appearance of Miss Henning as the Fairy Queen.⁴³ Whether or not Mrs. Smith continued in the character of Clarinda, I do not know.

As to the merits and demerits of the production, they were just what one would naturally expect under the circumstances. There can be no question that such sensation as was caused was due to the spectacle devised and executed by J. R. Smith, the artist. The scenery was, I think, new, for in the spring Smith had written Ludlow from Mobile reminding him to see to it that the painter made new sets and did not attempt to use old ones.⁴⁴ New or old, it obviously dazzled those who saw it.

The *Republican* (October 11) said: "For the scenery and the stage arrangements the managers deserve much applause; there were several scenes, and especially the view of the Palace by moon light, which could not be excelled." "The Wandering Cavite," whose literary style bore a close family resemblance to that of "Asmodeus," did not get around to reviewing the entertainment until the following week, but, when he did, he atoned for his tardiness and apparently sought by a display of archaisms, pseudo-poetical phrases, and grammatical errors to rival the exhibition in the theatre. "Gentle Reader," he began, "hath the Fates directed thy steps to the Temple of Thespis to greet thine optics with the fairest vision fancy in her brightest dreams could have pictured, or the most prolific imagination conceived." But even this sentence would not suffice to express his rapture. "Was

⁴³ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 474-75; Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 131; *Mo. Rep.*, October 27, 1837.

⁴⁴ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 15, 1837, Smith Collection.

it not a most magnificent and splendid display? The meed of the highest praise is due to the *Artist*, for this exuberant and luxurious optical feast, the like of which for lustre, pomp and circumstance was never before produced in the *States*."

Of the musical side of the performance, less could be said in praise. The actors were, of course, overweighted with their burdens. They were clearly out of their element. The *Republican* complains of the enunciation, and says further that "the singing was too feeble to be heard at a distance from the stage." For the most illuminating account of the proceedings, we must turn again to the "Cavite," who, once he got past the scenery, evolved an intelligent criticism, in substance if not in diction.

Taken *tout en semble*, the music, thy friend cannot laud as first rate, nor was it in keeping with the scenic illusion, yet with the exception of occasional discord and discrepancy in time, and inasmuch as most of the votaries of the Temple do not assume celebrity in the science of vocal harmony, it may be deemed tolerably fair.

"Felix" the Prince deserves much credit for his musical efforts, not being a professed vocalist; the personation of the Prince, for it can scarcely be called a *character*, is nothing, he is what is ordinarily styled a walking gentleman.

The character of "Dandini" savored too much of the common fault of the representer; he was a bufoon from the time he assumes the Prince until his abdication, which speaks very little for the common sense of the sisters. . . .

"Pompolino" was superlatively ridiculous, and if such is the design of the character, he was successful, which is not most likely from the context, but rather a pompous, pedantic personage; and the graceless way he has of placing his hands beneath the skirts of his coat is truly disrespectful. The singing of the two latter, who are tolerably well matched when together, was anything but a "concord of sweet sounds," but rather discord discordant.

The part of "Pedro" is nothing in itself, neither for wit, humor, or eccentricity of personal qualities.—Yet the drollery and ludicrousness of the personator makes it the life of the piece; he is the original "Pedro" in this country, and is probably the first who made anything of it. What an astounding countenance he has! to look upon which unmoved would require the forbearance of the most phlegmatic of stoics.

"Cinderella" sustained herself with merited applause, and deserves much credit for making as she did out of a part which hath not incident worthy of her abilities; and surpassed expectation in her musical efforts. Still she is not competent as a vocalist to the task imposed on her. . . .

After praising the work of the Fairy Queen, the "Cavite" ended his review with the expressed opinion that the opera had neither plot nor incident "sufficient to give it interest in a matured mind" and furthermore that without vocal music of the best quality was "better suited to the puerile imagination, than to the cultivated intelligence of the adult."⁴⁵ By scenery alone could it be redeemed. In this connection the comments of some of "Old Sol's" acquaintances are pertinent. He records:

Singularly enough I received the same advice from a friend here, after the first performance, that I did from a friend in Mobile: "*Cut out the music!*" The fact is, the people of St. Louis had then very little taste for music in any form. . . . "Yes," said my friend, who was no other than Mr. E. H. Beebe, "cut out the music, Sol; it is tedious."⁴⁶

Perhaps the people of St. Louis had more of a taste for music than "Sol" suspected.

The success of *Cinderella* was, as elsewhere, instantaneous, and it had what was for St. Louis a record run. It was presented on seven successive evenings, Sunday, of course, excluded, and was repeated twice during the brief remainder of the season. An editorial in the *Republican* (October 13) announced enthusiastically that "for the first three nights of its representation, there were present exceeding one hundred ladies, each night. Many of the fair and the elite of the city have been there." The next day it added that the production had been attended "by the most crowded and fashionable audiences ever assembled in the St. Louis theatre." Surely Ludlow and Smith must have felt repaid for their efforts.

⁴⁵ *Mo. Rep.*, October 16, 1837.

⁴⁶ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

The first season in the new theatre was now drawing to a close. There was little left to be done but to give the necessary benefits. Of these a few call for special mention. For his, Anderson selected *King Lear*, in which he played Edmund. Joe Field, according to the "Cavite," "sustained himself creditably" but "was not physically adequate to his task," the interpretation of Lear himself. Mat Field gave as Edgar his best performance of the season, and Miss Riddle was welcomed back as Cordelia, after an absence of two weeks.⁴⁷ For the benefit of Mrs. Kutz, Joe Field essayed Hamlet. She was the Queen; Anderson, the King; Mat Field, Laertes; and Eliza Petrie (no doubt "with songs"), Ophelia.⁴⁸ Of this performance, I have found no description.

There were also a number of revivals: *The Dramatist* (for Ludlow); *The Hypocrite* and *Three and the Deuce* (for Smith); *The Inconstant*; *Sweethearts and Wives*; *The Golden Farmer*; *The Sledge Driver*; *Man and Wife*; and several others. More important were some local *premières*. One of these was *The Forest of Bondy* or *The Dog of Montargis* in which the Salzmanns' "sagacious dog Rolla" performed for the benefit of his mistress. There was also *The Partisan*, according to our usual critic, "a new and interesting Drama, founded on the Novel of the same name, which was well and worthily received;—the language, in every instance, appeared to be appropriate to the speaker, and in many instances chaste, elegant and refined."⁴⁹ Chaste, elegant, and refined—what more could be asked? This appears to have been what was termed an "original" piece, but the name of the dramatist was not revealed.

Eliza Riddle appeared on her night in *The Wrecker's Daughter* and *The Youthful Queen*. It was quite an occasion. She was welcomed by a packed house, formally, and to her great confusion, addressed from a side-box by Colonel Keemle, and presented with a gold watch, inscribed "*Virtus*

⁴⁷ *Mo. Rep.*, October 19, 1837.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, October 31, 1837.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, October 23, 1837.

et opera, St. Louis, October 23, 1837," a chain to match, and a diamond ring, "the whole," as the paper is careful to reveal, "estimated at \$360." The *Republican* said that some idea of the young lady's popularity could be "drawn from the fact that the crowd assembled at the box door to procure seats was so great, when the hour of ten arrived, that every box was taken in a few minutes and many were unable to procure seats at all—a number of ladies were compelled to go into the second tier of boxes."⁵⁰ Equally well fared the beloved Miss Petrie (in *Man and Wife* and *The Loan of a Lover*). She too was honored with a public address and presented with a gold watch, inscribed "*Virtui et Hilari Histrioni*," a chain, and "a full set of pearl diamond jewelry which were provided for the occasion by the young gentlemen of the city." Who shall say that these young women did not deserve cheers and diamonds? They had worked hard and given very great pleasure. Theirs was no sinecure. They knew nothing of the luxury of the long run. New rôles had to be learned and old ones re-studied every week. And there were daily rehearsals to be attended; the fact that very few plays really had enough of these did not make the tasks of the actors any lighter. According to my count, Miss Riddle appeared during the season in fifty-one different rôles. As for "little Pete," as Smith called her, she had to her credit one hundred and twenty-eight appearances in no less than eighty-one different characters! All in four months! And my record is not complete, some issues of the paper being missing. It is of course true that most of these rôles were comparatively short, many of them actually so. Yet even so their labors, which included "finding" their own costumes, must have been prodigious.

Just as arduously had the gentlemen of the company toiled, but they reaped not the same rich harvests. Except for the managers themselves and possibly the elder of the Field brothers, they faced on their nights many empty seats.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, October 25, 1837.

At Joe Field's benefit St. Louis saw what would appear to have been one of the only two performances ever given an original and ambitious American tragedy, *Aaron Burr, Emperor of Mexico*. This piece, the work of W. H. Smith, a Mobile lawyer and later (1868-70) governor of Alabama, had been staged, also for Joe Field's benefit, in Ludlow and Smith's southern theatre on the nineteenth of the previous May, the author assuming the title rôle, in which his performance was "rather queer, but not *very* bad."⁵¹ In the St. Louis production, Joe Field stepped up into the part of Burr, leaving Blennerhassett to Anderson. Mat Field played Albert Burr; Miss Riddle, Theodosia; and Miss Petrie, Mrs. Blennerhassett.⁵² In his *Theatrical Management*, "Old Sol" says of the tragedy: "It was a good play. . . . The idea of carrying the action of the piece into Mexico, and there placing the hero upon the throne of the Montezumas, was a bold one, and well carried out."⁵³ A communication printed in the *Republican* of November 1 gives us this further information.

The poet has taken advantage of his licence and carried out the plot according to his own opinion of what *might* have been the effect of the consummation of the wishes of Col. Burr. The discovery and trial of Burr, and the disgrace of Blannerhassett [*sic*], are not alluded to in the piece. . . . Though Theodosia was the real name of Burr's daughter, the sketch of that character in the tragedy is not taken at all from the real life of the lady.

I am sorry that we have extant no review of this performance, but an excerpt from one of Blennerhassett's soliloquies will give us some notion of the style and quality of the verse.

Why do I pause—yet why should I not pause,
 Standing on such a brink—before mine eye
 Whirls eddying darkness as I vainly look
 Piercing the gloom, to view the moonless future?
 (*Thunder and lightning*)

⁵¹ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 20, 1837, Smith Collection.

⁵² *Mo. Rep.*, November 1, 1837.

⁵³ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

Why does the thunder rave? Why rend the sky
 Asunder with his burning arm? Why pause
 As if he listened to my breathless thoughts?
 Is it that 'tween his mutterings he means
 That I should well bethink me of my purpose?
 (Louder thunder)

Rage on, ethereal rebel, warn the world
 That earth has children daring as thyself.⁵⁴

One suspects that the author did well to abandon poetry for the more practical profession of politics.

On Saturday, November 4, the season of 1837 was brought to a cheerful close. There were two new plays and an old favorite. One of the novelties was *Tom Cringle or The Sailor's Log*, which had first been exhibited two nights before. The other was the "new farce of *The Rival Pages*." In the first piece, the title rôle was filled by Joe Field, Placide appearing as Gipsey Jack, Eliza Riddle as Elizabeth, and Eliza Petrie as Fanny. In *The Rival Pages*, Miss Riddle was the Victoire; Miss Petrie, the Julie. The bill was completed by *The Loan of a Lover*—Peter Spuyk, Placide; and Gertrude, Miss Petrie.

And so the curtain came down, and the company was hurried off to Mobile. But before they departed, the leading lady and the leading man repaired to the home of Colonel Keemle and were married. As the marriage turned out most happily, this is a cheerful note upon which to end the chapter. But I shall add Smith's observation that, St. Louis not having as yet "begun to feel the hard times," the season was moderately successful. This too is cheerful. But there were breakers ahead.

⁵⁴ *Mo. Rep.*, November 1, 1837.

CHAPTER XI

"THE WINTER OF OUR DISCONTENT," 1838

ON REACHING Mobile for their winter season, Ludlow and Smith found themselves anticipated. A rival company was already in the field. The discovery was, naturally, not a pleasant one, but, as matters turned out, the newcomer soon found himself on the rocks, and besought them to take over his contracts with his actors in return for his promise that he would abandon management forever. "It was," comments Smith, "undoubtedly a great undertaking to assume these engagements; but, having a theatre unoccupied in St. Louis, *only* 1,400 miles distant, the bargain was consummated."¹ Had the usually careful managers realized just how great their undertaking was to prove, it is to be doubted if they would have gone ahead. But go ahead they did, and prepared to dispatch northward a troupe to entertain the winter-bound St. Louisans.

The company assembled for the occasion was composed chiefly of the recruits from the rival theatre. Of these, perhaps the most important was Thomas Lyne, who had recently been appearing in some of the New York houses,² and who had before that done some barnstorming in the Southern states with Smith. The others, as listed in the announcement in the *Missouri Republican* of January 8, 1838, were: Messrs. Brunten,³ Rice, Henry, Munden, Rogers, McBride, West, Rose, Willis, and Gentzen; and Mesdames Henry, Brunton, Muller,⁴ Lyne, and Foster—not a particularly imposing array

¹ Smith, *Theatrical Management*, p. 132; also, Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, pp. 492-93.

² Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, IV, 75, 238, 398.

³ The name is here misspelled; it should be Brunton.

⁴ This name should be Mueller.

of talent. Awake to the weakness of their second company, the managers wisely determined to draw upon their own forces for additional strength. Mindful of the popularity of Eliza Petrie, and also no doubt of her good nature, they chose her to play the leading business. This move, however gratifying it might prove to the St. Louisans, was not at all pleasing to the theatregoers of Mobile, and the young men of the town sent a species of black-hand letter to the managers, threatening dire vengeance if their favorite were torn from them. Since, unfortunately, they were unable to convert the young lady herself to their point of view, they were compelled to submit.

It so happened that just at this time it was impossible for either member of the firm to leave Mobile, and they were constrained, therefore, to cast about for someone to serve as their lieutenant. The position would not be an easy one. It would be the task of the individual selected to shepherd the nondescript company up the icy Mississippi to the new scene of their endeavors and there to launch a winter season in a theatre built expressly for summer use. As soon as possible, it was thought within about a fortnight, he was to be relieved by Smith. For the position, they chose young Matthew C. Field, at that time not yet twenty-five years of age, and wholly without managerial experience. Probably the factors which determined their choice, aside from their desire to use him for the first comedy business, were his natural intelligence, his popularity both on the stage and off, his irreproachable character, and, finally, the warm affection which both the partners undoubtedly entertained for the impulsive and warm-hearted young man. With what feelings he accepted the responsibility, I do not know, but there can be no question concerning his emotions once he had arrived upon the scene of his managerial *début* and found himself daily in a more desperate plight, for to these the agonized and reproachful epistles he fired back at the authors of his misery bear ample witness. It is on these letters and, later, on those

written by Smith himself after he had fought his way to St. Louis on horseback and on foot, through snow and ice, that I shall rely chiefly for an account of this unhappy venture. The contemporary newspapers furnish but little information outside of advertisements, being too busy fighting the battles of Martin Van Buren, pro and con, to notice such paltry things as plays and play-actors.

The new company reached St. Louis before daylight, January 6, 1838, and at noon Mat Field sat down to write his first report to his employers. In this letter, he notes the encouraging circumstance that the weather is very mild, but says that he has "bought from Tilden, Burd, & Co. 2 large, handsome pyramid stoves for 1st tier \$40 each—2 smaller for 2nd tier \$15 each—2 for ladies Dressing rooms \$8 each, and ordered one plain grate for green room."⁵ This was a wise precaution. He adds that he has bought "sixty bushells [*sic*] of coal at 12½ cts. (very cheap)." The problem of heating the great theatre with its many large windows was the most serious facing the young manager, and he lost no time in devoting himself to all phases of it. "The doors," he goes on to say, "are not all up around the boxes but they can be finished during the week. dont you think the stoves would throw more heat thro' the house were the side rails left as they are, and place a green baize door to open across the lobby on each side, about where the front doors already put up, terminate? The plan strikes me as being so likely to please you, that I am sorry I dont feel authorised to order it so." That the question of keeping the house warm was not the only thing troubling him, however, is suggested by the following rather laconic observation: "The people are of course curious about the company—I carry a stiff lip." He says that he plans to open Monday with *The Partisan* and *The Day after the Wedding*, and that Mueller, the orchestra leader brought up from Mobile, has composed a new patriotic overture in honor of the occasion.

⁵ M. Field to Ludlow and Smith, St. Louis, January 6, 1838, Smith Collection.

For some reason which is not explained, Field found it necessary to postpone the opening of the theatre from Monday till Wednesday, and in the meantime he wrote his second report.

St. Louis, Monday night Jan. 8, 1838

MESSRS. LUDLOW & SMITH

Gent. I have got no news from you yet—Mr. Lidyard says he must have $1\frac{1}{2}$ Doz. wing lamps,—and I cant get them for less than $4\frac{1}{2}$ a pair—I suppose I must give it. Your instructions were so brief I can scarcely turn round without fearing to overstep. I have bought a small Bill of necessary stationary (about \$8) and have opened cash acct. &c.

I have sent a brief note to each of the Editors saying that "I am not instructed as to their understanding with you, and that their names shall be kept at the door untill the arrival of Mr. Smith." This I think will secure their favorable notice (which is needed) without at all compromising the independent policy you adopted when you came here with a full and powerful company. . . . Tuesday 1 o'clock I have recd. a note from *Chambers*, of the Republican—he signs himself "Old Joe" and says they repented of their last years arrangement and mean to change it—they will charge, and *you* may charge &c, and suggests that advertising should be paid for, and free admission go against Benefit cards and other notices." I have sent no reply—they pay of course. . . .

Now, in all I say and do you can doubtless perceive, I zealously do my best—If I fail in hitting your views, yourselves are to blame, for I am indeed surprised that you could have even *conceived* the idea of placing this most enormous burden on my shoulders—After *Foster* and *Lidyard* I can scarcely get even the common duties out of the people, and as for a feeling of interest, I might as well ask them to go hang themselves—Since I landed I have scarcely allowed myself time to shave, and some how or other, I am afraid you will not be here as soon as you said—no matter—It annoys me dreadfully, but I'll stick it out, and when you come;—wont I crow?

Yours faithfully,

M. FIELD.⁶

The winter season was opened January 10, but with Knowles' *William Tell* instead of *The Partisan* as the *pièce de*

⁶ M. Field to Ludlow and Smith, St. Louis, January 8, 1838, *ibid.*

résistance, Lyne of course playing the hero; Miss Petrie, Albert; and Field himself, the tyrant Gessler. The manager and the leading lady appeared also in the afterpiece, supported by Munden, McBride, and Mrs. Henry. On Thursday the *Republican* advertised *Damon and Pythias*, with Lyne and Field as the friends, Miss Petrie as Calanthe, and Mrs. Lyne making her local *début* as Hermione; the farce was *The Weathercock*, with Field and Miss Petrie, "in which she will introduce some of her favorite songs."⁷ So the new season went on with the fare growing lighter and lighter for reasons which will presently appear. The first week (or, really, part week) was brought to a close with *The Point of Honor* and *Charles II*,⁸ and the manager had a chance to take stock of his situation. This he did on Sunday in a letter addressed to his employers. He begins by giving the receipts for the first four nights, \$282.00, \$84.00, \$85.00, and \$103.00, respectively. "This," he confesses, "is bad business but you probably did not expect better."⁹ Yet he is not discouraged. The weather, which on his arrival had been so balmy, has become very severe, "and the house cannot be *well* heated, I think, without considerable expense, but however I think the theatrical inclination here is quite as strong as ever, and there is little wanting but your *personal* exertions to do a capital winter business."

There is apparently a letter of this series missing from the collection in which the others are preserved, for he says: "The impression which I mentioned against you on the specie account is quite gone—and the public anxious to find amusement at the theatre." In none of the other letters have I come across anything to which this allusion can refer. For an explanation, or what would seem to me to be an explanation, we must turn to Joe Cowell's *Thirty Years among the Players* and Ludlow's *Dramatic Life*. In the former's rather contemptuous paragraph on Ludlow will be found the following passage:

⁷ *Mo. Rep.*, January 11, 1838.

⁸ *Mo. Argus*, January 13, 1838.

⁹ M. Field to Ludlow and Smith, January 14, 1838, Smith Collection.

At that short-lived time [1837] when what went for money was intrinsically of little or no value, and, of course, most plentiful, a splendid theatre was built and leased to them at St. Louis; and the profits of their first season was [*sic*] immense, for, receiving only money at par, or specie, and disbursing the depreciated paper then generally in circulation, their opportunities for a profitable *exchange* were alone worth a little fortune.¹⁰

This accusation Ludlow denounced in his book and categorically denied that his firm was ever guilty of such practices. "Now, this was simply and unqualifiedly an *untruth*. But Old Joe was not particular about what he said when he took a dislike to any one."¹¹ It is true that Ludlow casts somewhat similar aspersions upon the veracity of his partner and, so far as I have been able to determine, without justice. In the case of Cowell, however, there is not wanting evidence that the old autobiographer was right, as he succeeds in disproving quite effectively some of the Englishman's assertions. Nevertheless, there can be no question that the currency situation caused the managers much anxiety. In this same letter just quoted, Field goes on to say: "Some of the N. O. [New Orleans] money you gave me is below par 5 per ct.—I have worked it nearly all off however." One wonders upon whom it was "worked off." Moreover, Smith's later correspondence contains frequent references to the same problem, and to his attempts to make the most out of the undesirable paper. But there is, so far at least as I have been able to find, nothing to confirm Cowell's accusation.

As I said above, the press unfortunately demonstrated but little interest in this season; the papers now extant contain very few allusions to the nightly events in the theatre. There were, however, occasional letters, some if not all, no matter what the signature, from the pen of the ex-manager, Dr. De Prefontaine. One in the *Republican* of January 15 attacked Decius Rice for the manner of his performance of

¹⁰ Cowell, *Thirty Years among the Players*, p. 90.

¹¹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 359-60.

Captain Copp in *Charles II*, observing that "good taste and decency" had been "openly and unnecessarily outraged." Two days later another anonymous correspondent came to the rescue of the actor, flatly denying that he had done anything in the least improper. Such hostile demonstrations, added to his already numerous worries, did not tend to increase young Field's peace of mind.

Things now went from bad to worse. The weather was cold, and nothing he, or anyone else for that matter, could do would warm the theatre. The St. Louisans, however strong their "theatrical inclinations," simply refused to part with any of their very scanty money for the privilege of shivering for two hours to see a lot of poor actors doing their worst, or indeed their best, in such pieces as their stage manager could put on. As the days went on and no Sol Smith appeared upon the frozen scene, that young man grew more and more alarmed. He tried every kind of piece: *Othello* with Lyne as the Moor and himself as Iago, *Virginus*, and *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*; *Therese* and *The Robber's Wife*; *Wives as They Were* and *Nature and Philosophy*; farces; and operettas. Nothing availed. Down went the receipts with the temperature. Field's situation now became desperate. He had on his hands a number of sullen and rebellious actors and actresses, to say nothing of musicians and stage hands, and no money, or next to none, with which to pay their meager salaries. The only way to get money was by attracting the public to his performances, and attracted the public would not be. But I shall leave it to him to describe the course of events, quoting his letter under the date of January 21.

I have not written to you since last Sunday (a week today) and your business here has turned out so bad that it is an unpleasant task to inform you of it at all. I hope Mr. Smith will be here tomorrow and relieve me from responsibility, for although I can attach no blame at all to myself, yet I feel most uneasy and uncomfortable at the situation of affairs—as near as I can calculate your

outgo, I find the income wont meet, and I am very sorry to have to say so to you. The Receipts during the week were as follows

Monday—Soldiers' Daughter & Loan of a Lover.....	\$ 68.00
Tuesday—Othello & Dumb Belle.....	145.00
Wednesday—Tom Cringle & Young Widow.....	67.50
Thursday—N. W. T. P. old Debts & No!.....	62.50
Friday—Turn Out—Hus at Sight & No Song, No Supper.....	43.00
Saturday—Virginus & Nature & Philosophy.....	78.00
	<hr/>
	\$464.00

. . . a large *fire* broke out on Friday night just at curtain rising—the few that were in run out, and we actually played the first piece (*The Turn Out*) to the orchestra. . . . Some young men in the private Box the other night cut up a few Shines—and *Lewis Clark* advised me to *close* 'till Smith came—I did'nt think it a measure likely to meet your approbation, so declined—but the next morning I went to see *Mr. Lane*¹² and he advised me to engage *Mr. Cooper*, a city constable. I did so, promising him nothing untill *Mr. Smith* comes, and since then the house has been orderly & Respectable. . . .¹³

Field struggled along until the end of the month. Then, in despair, he did probably the only thing he could do—closed the theatre, at the same time announcing in the papers that it would be reopened on the arrival of *Sol Smith*.¹⁴ On the thirtieth he wrote *Ludlow* to inform him of his action. He gave the week's receipts as \$289.00. The best night had been the last, Saturday, when *The Dead Shot*, *The Warlock of the Glen*, and *The Poor Soldier* had brought in \$79.00; the worst, Tuesday, when *The Dumb Belle*, *Therese*, and *The Poor Soldier* had attracted but \$29.00. After paying in full all the salaries except those of *Miss Petrie*, *Mueller*, *Forster*, and himself, he had left in the treasury \$26.18. “. . . I may tell you,” he writes in defense of his course, “that it was impossible to keep the Theatre open. If I had, and *Mr. Smith* did

¹² Dr. William Carr Lane, who was serving another of his eight terms as mayor.

¹³ M. Field to Ludlow and Smith, January 21, 1838. The original of this letter, in the Smith Collection, is badly frayed, but there is in the library of the Missouri Historical Society, pasted in a scrapbook, a newspaper article in which it is quoted.

¹⁴ *Mo. Rep.*, January 27, 1838.

not arrive by next Salary day, I could not pay the people, and there would have been a scene which I have never yet witnessed in your company and hope I never may."¹⁵

Growing almost hourly more frantic, the tyro manager continued to fire reproachful epistles at the only one of his superiors whose whereabouts he knew. Nor was his exasperation decreased by the realization that he was casting his letters off, as it were, into space with no hope of a reply within weeks. On February 1 he poured out his woes in the following lament:

What am I to do? Why did you not give me some direction to guide me in cases of emergency? Mr. Smith has not arrived—the river is chooked [*sic*] up—the weather *bitter* cold, and I dont know whether I am to expect Mr. Smith *at all* or not. Last week the houses dwindled down to \$29, and confidently expecting Sol. to arrive on monday or tuesday, I, on Saturday closed the Theatre, believing that the Lewis's¹⁶ would be here in a day or two, and with Sol. and them we could open again with credit and eclat. Four days have elapsed, Sol has not arrived, nor the Lewis's, the weather is absolutely *petrifying*—and now must I go on and make the company play to Parquette chairs, and the shivering Bar and Door Keepers? or must I not? . . . Must I keep this fine large Theatre open for a dozen blaguards [*sic*] to come in and sneer at the "*new company*," or do you consider it better for me to wait Mr. Smith's arrival? What am I to do if Mr. Smith does not arrive next week? I am told that you remarked in Mobile "*if this house brought but \$50 per night, it would be at least so much off the general expense*," had I heard this before, I should not have closed; but how should I meet the people at the end of the week—How am I to meet them as it is? The result of the matter will be that I shall be roundly blamed on all hands. Had you only said "Keep open," or "Keep shut" or any thing which I might have clung to as a palpable order, I would have done it tho' we had all frozen into pillars of salt upon the Stage. But now, without compass or ballast, I am like a feather on the wave and when Sol gets here, I expect to have the whole amount of misfortune laid at my charge.

I find in the mornings papers the notice of a *concert* to be given

¹⁵ M. Field to N. M. Ludlow, January 30, 1838, Smith Collection.

¹⁶ Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lewis.



MATTHEW C. FIELD, IN THE COSTUME HE WORE ON THE SANTE FE
TRAIL AFTER HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE STAGE IN 1839
(From a painting by James Carson, in the possession of Miss Cornelia Maury)

at the Missouri Hotel to-morrow evening by *Petrie*, the *Bruntons*, and *Mueller*—that's all I know about it.¹⁷

In the sequel to this letter, dashed off the next day, young Field's anguish rose in a crescendo and he reveals with emotion some of "the secrets of his prison-house." After reading it, one is apt to suspect that it was not only the icy weather that kept the parquet and boxes empty.

I *cannot* exercise [*sic*] this company—we cant play the simplest melodrama's—I have exhausted all the *five act* pieces I could cast, and latterly made up the Bill with a melodrama and two farces, and the melodrama (not to mention the farces) was so disgracefully done that I have no words to tell you my distress. The Warlock o' the Glen, the Maid and Magpie and the Wandering Boys, were acted in such a manner as has dam'd the company outright and downright. The excuse is there are no *Books* to study from, and it is true, tho' had they an interested or accomodating spirit among them this difficulty might be obviated. I cannot find pieces within the capacity of the company, or if I find the piece, there is the next impediment in the scarcity of Books—The women are good for nothing—Mrs. Henry is the best, she worked as well as she could untill she went down sick and Mrs. Mueller went on with the Book and read the *Dame* in the *Maid and Magpie*. *Deborah* in the trifling operetta of "No!" we had to *cut out*. An *old woman* is the only part that *Mrs. Mueller* is at all *to be endured* in, and old women she flatly refuses to play, and she laid me under an everlasting obligation when she consented to go on and read the old woman for Mrs. Henry. As for *Mr. Lyne*, I think you had better discharge him, and hire *Mr. Forrest*, or keep them both and let them play alternate nights. Mrs. Lyne is not half the value of Miss Voght, and Mrs. Foster could'nt be taught to make one in a standing group for a picture: she came on for the *female Slave* in *Virginus*, dressed in a shining silk frock, tight modern sleeves, hair slicked up a la Paris, and throwing aside her veil with a fashionable air she tripped on the stage and made a sweet smiling curtsy to Mr. Virginus!

I have shut up the Theatre in dispair [*sic*], but I cant feel easy doing nothing, and if Sol dont come again Sunday, I will open next week for *three nights*—The idea of making expenses is out of the question—I cant imagine what you are dreaming of, but I am cer-

¹⁷ M. Field to N. M. Ludlow, February 1, 1838, Smith Collection.

tainly very much obliged to you for the delightful change you have made for me.¹⁸

Two days later, he wrote again announcing his definite decision to resume operations, though on a limited scale. His optimism had not increased. He says:

The people are discontented and querulous, and I—as you by your long experience must have anticipated—can do nothing with them. . . . The state of the weather, the opinion entertained of the company, and the *inefficiency* of the company will admit of no more than three performances a week, and I am even in doubt whether some of the members will not knock even this in the head. . . . As long as I *could* get along, I managed to humour and carry the people my own way, but now that I am over head and heels in perplexity and trouble, I cannot temporise with them, and I have no patience to endure them.¹⁹

To make matters even worse, “I am told (the river is tight frozen across) that I need not now hope to see Sol till Spring.” Small wonder that he was in despair!

Happily, however, his ordeal was almost over. This last letter was written on the fourth. On the seventh, “Old Sol” emerged from the wintry waste across the river. He arrived, tired and sore, having traveled that day thirty-five miles on horseback and foot, ending what he termed “the most disagreeable, horrible, outrageous, d—dest journey, from the mouth of the Ohio River, which ever mortal man escaped from alive.”²⁰ In his *Theatrical Management*, describing his arrival, he says he was “welcomed by the company and their manager with unfeigned satisfaction. As for poor Matt, his manifestations of joy were extravagant and sincere, unmixed with a single atom of self-interest.”²¹ “Matt,” he states, had done “all that man could do to make the season a success.”

Despite his fatigue, he lost no time bemoaning the situation,

¹⁸ M. Field to N. M. Ludlow, February 2, 1838, *ibid.*

¹⁹ M. Field to N. M. Ludlow, February 4, 1838, *ibid.*

²⁰ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, February 7, 1838, *ibid.*

²¹ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

but at once set about doing what he could to retrieve it. For one thing, he "went on" that evening as Delph in *Family Fars*, one of his favorite farce parts. But before doing anything else, he managed somehow to hurry off a letter to his partner to apprise him of the conditions he had found on his arrival. He begins by announcing "our concern here is in the very worst kind of a way—the Receipts having amounted to just *nothing at all* after the 1st week!" The performers, he finds, are actually suffering for money to pay their board. . . . one thing is certain there has been very near *rebellion* in the Corps—Lyne has acted like a scoundrel to Mat, who has given every thing in the way of business to him.—I shall keep a tight *line* on Mr. Lyne, and the first trip he makes, I will cut his cable and let him drift. *I know him of old.*—He has been drunk in his business & insolent. . . . The company is d—d bad, so far as women are concerned—Miss P being the only one that's bespoke—So Mat says.—Poor Mat!—It is laughable and pitiable to see how the poor fellow has been used up by his 3 weeks management—and his joy at seeing me was actually unspeakable.

Smith immediately announced that he would keep the theatre open every night; as he said to Ludlow, this course would cost but little more. Therefore the public could enjoy the pleasures of the drama, after a fashion, nightly if it was so minded; unhappily, it was not. The manager's next letter was written in instalments on three successive days, February 9, 10, and 11. In it he goes into more of the painful details, some of which may prove illuminating.²²

In the first place, there is *no talent* in the company, except what is possessed by 4 or 5—and *the people know it*. We can do no pieces but light melo-dramas and petit comedies, and repeat them often, for the people *cannot* study sufficiently fast, being nearly all novices. Then we have no *wardrobe*. . . . Mat, Petrie, and Munden are the only good ones—Henry and wife are next best—I leave out Lyne, as he (of course) is a kind of star, and not to be ranked among the *stock* actors. Mrs. Lyne is sick. Brunton does very well for walking gents, but his wife—oh G—d—excuse my profanity—for she needs it—particularly about the face.

²² Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, February 9-11, 1838, Smith Collection.

This letter also throws light on the arrangements he made with the daily papers. He agreed to pay each one forty dollars a year, instead of the usual one dollar per insertion, which would have been ruinous. They, he observes, did not like these terms, but could not very well refuse them.

I found it necessary, or *politic*, rather, to give one editorial ticket to each daily office—subscribe to their daily sheet, and subscribe (L. & S.) to the new Exchange Rooms, \$15 a year—this makes all smooth, and a perfectly good understanding exists between the Editorial fraternity and the Theatre. To be sure, they do not say much *good*—for they cant with any truth!—but they say nothing bad.

Whatever its two rivals may have done, the *Republican* played safe by saying nothing, and, unfortunately, it is the only one today accessible. Smith implores his partner to send up some costumes—"2 or 3 decent tunics—a shape dress or two—a couple of old men's coats—some breeches, vests, &—We are sufferers most intolerably for the want of them. If you had seen me as Kit Cosey, you would have never suspected (from the dress) what I was playing." The next day he reported that more stoves were demanded, but said they were not likely to be forthcoming since the last ones were as yet unpaid for. On the principle that misery loves company, he may have hoped to cheer Ludlow by passing on the tale of a traveler just come from Louisville who reported that in that city the great Mrs. Drake had recently played *The Stranger* to an eight-dollar house. He closed with a post-script indicated by a pointing hand to the effect that it was "cold as thunder."

Meantime the performances, such as they were, continued. The advertisements in the *Republican* tell what pieces were given, or rather were to be, since the notices appeared a few hours before the curtain rose. Some of those, shall we say *attempted?* were: *Town and Country* (with Smith as Kit, Lyne as Reuben, Field as Jack Hawbuck, and Miss Petrie as Rosalie), followed by *Damon and Pythias* (with Brunton and Field

as the friends); *The Warlock of the Glen* (with Lyne in the title rôle, Smith as Andrew Mucklestane, Henry as Sandin, and Miss Petrie as Adela), followed by *The Swiss Cottage* (with Field, Brunton, and Miss Petrie); *The Broken Sword* (with Lyne, Field, Miss Petrie, and Mrs. Brunton), followed by *The Loan of a Lover* (with Field and Miss Petrie); *The Soldier's Daughter* (with Field and Miss Petrie), followed by *The Lying Valet* (with Smith); *Therese* (with Lyne and Miss Petrie), followed by *The Dumb Belle* (with Field and Miss Petrie). It will be seen that Eliza Petrie was earning her salary.

On February 13, Smith embarked upon another lengthy epistle to his absent partner. "It is a settled thing," he states, "the people don't think of coming to the Theatre!—\$50 a night we consider quite a good house! The weather is so cold, the lamps wont burn in the area, and only partially in the house—and we use the best kind of oil, which costs \$1.62 a gallon." He requests that his very meager supply of books be supplemented. "Mr. Lane is trying to get up a house for Thursday—he requested 'Guy Mannering'—no book to be found in the city—then 'S. and Wives'—do! ditto!—Isn't it provoking? He then agreed to 'Victorine'—no book!" Provoking it must have been when the mayor himself was extending a helping hand. But he finally succeeded in making up a bill which certainly should have proved attractive, as the advertisement in the *Republican* (February 15) given on the following page bears witness.

Yet even this alluring program failed to draw more than \$50.50, rather less than the \$600 predicted by Dr. Lane. But even \$50.50 was better than \$15.50, the sum taken in two evenings before. Smith, in this same diary-like epistle, says that that evening it was so cold that the lights in front of the theatre refused to burn, and that he had been compelled to substitute candles, "—all for \$15.50!—Isn't it horrible?" For the Mayor's night, as the advertisement proclaimed, the manager had been at particular pains to heat the house.

We had two large stoves put in the Parquette (from the Boxes) and removed the two small ones from the 2d tier to the lower tier. . . . The oil (by heating it) burns on the stage—but in front [in the auditorium], except the two that the stove pipes *touch*, will not burn, so we use candles! . . . Since the stoves have been removed to the Parquette, the half dozen people around each don't move during the whole evening.

ST. LOUIS THEATRE

STOVES *are placed in the Parquette.*

This Evening, February 15th, 1838

The admired comedy of

CHARLES II

King Charles	Mr. M. Field
Capt. Copp	Sol Smith
Edward, with two favorite songs	Brunton
Mary Copp, with two favorite songs	Miss Petrie
Lady Clara, with a favorite song	Mrs. Brunton
Recitation, Byron's <i>Darkness</i>	Mr. M. Field
A new Grand Overture composed by	Mr. Mueller
Comic Song, Adam and Eve	Mr. Sol Smith

To conclude with the

RENDEZVOUS

Sophia	Miss Petrie
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But he notes optimistically in closing that the temperature is becoming milder, having risen to two degrees below zero from twenty below. The situation, however, was actually worse than it had been under the Field régime, and he decided that it would be necessary in order to save expenses to open the theatre but four nights a week. He even permitted it to be known that, if requested to do so by the company, he would close up entirely for the time being and pay the actors' board, "but it was no go—too covetous by half.—They suffer a little hell every time they play . . . but they are too fond of their salary to abate one tittle of it."²³ He has, he says, no

²³ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, February 13-18, 1838, *ibid.*

idea how he is going to pay the next week's salaries, as he has been unable to borrow any money. Yet, even so, he does not despair and says he will get along somehow without drawing upon Ludlow, who, he is aware, is hard-pressed at the other end of the line. All his hopes are pinned on his expected stars, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lewis, Josephine Clifton, John Scott, and the great Ellen Tree, one of the best drawing-cards in the country. As soon as they can get up the river, all will be well.

The *Republican* of February 16 gives an excellent, if dismal, background for Smith's reports.

The weather continues bitterly cold. . . . Nothing doing out of doors except what men cannot avoid. The market square is almost deserted, with here and there a solitary wagon, all supplies from that quarter are excessively dear and very scarce. Money matters are probably more pressing now than they yet have been. The prospect before the commercial part of our community is anything but cheering, and the accounts from other quarters has [*sic*] no tendency to brighten their hopes.

Small wonder that the citizenry clung to their firesides! Yet better times were around the corner for the Theatre at least.

On February 21, as a desperate expedient, the harassed actor-manager resurrected *Cinderella*, in spite of the fact that he had at hand neither book nor score, nor indeed even the talent that had failed to illumine his fall production.²⁴ Brunton, who had probably the only semblance of a voice among the men, he cast for the Prince. Mat Field, "ever willing to aid in any way, studied the music of the *Baron*, and played it in a manner entirely acceptable."²⁵ Of course, Miss Petrie and Smith himself returned to their old parts. On the whole, the production must have been, except for the scenery, a pretty sorry one, but it served its purpose, since it ran for

²⁴ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, February 18, 1838, *ibid.*

²⁵ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

four successive nights and had one additional performance on March 1. The receipts for the first four nights showed an improvement over the recent average; they came to \$150.50, \$62.00, \$107.00, and \$125.00.²⁶ But *Cinderella* was not all. "Old Sol" had another trump up his sleeve, "a new piece . . . just received from London, entitled the PET OF THE PETTICOATS" for which Mueller obligingly composed the music. Says the manager: "The character of *Job* suited me exactly, and Miss Petrie played *Paul the Pet* very prettily. We two were nightly encored in the song of the 'Pious Child,' which we sung to the tune of 'Old Mear.'"²⁷

The first night, the farce, being unknown, drew only \$80.00, but it so pleased the audience that evening that it was repeated, in all, five times "to the high gratification of the discriminating few who favored us with their presence on these cold nights." There was one theatregoer, however, who was distinctly not gratified, but who found himself, on the contrary, distinctly shocked. This was none other than the virtuous Dr. De Prefontaine, the erstwhile defender of Mrs. Bailey's modesty and pocket-book. His moral indignation was voiced in a lengthy lucubration published in the *Republican* on March 6. He denounced the play as "devoid of interest and ingenuity—abominably gross in language," and concluded the attack with the following devastating broadside:

The very name of the piece is, to say the last of it, *indelicate*, and one which should be offensive to any female ear. And you, gentlemen-play-goers, we would ask you, how would it sound to *your* ears, were one to speak of *your* sisters as so many "petticoats"? Fie, fie!—give us an ounce of civet!

The performance of *The Pet of the Petticoats* attended by De Prefontaine was Eliza Petrie's benefit. For Mat Field's, Smith, perhaps out of gratitude for the young man's strug-

²⁶ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, February 27, 1838, Smith Collection.

²⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

gles as his lieutenant, presented him as Hamlet. It was the first time Field had essayed the rôle of the Prince of Denmark, and I am sorry that we have extant no account of his interpretation or success. The others of the *dramatis personae* were Lyne as the Ghost, Rice as Claudius, Brunton as Laertes, Smith as the First Gravedigger, Miss Petrie as Ophelia, and Mrs. Henry as Gertrude. *Hamlet* not being enough for one evening, it was followed by *Why Don't She Marry?* with a comic song by the manager thrown in for good measure! At what hour, one wonders, was the performance over?

Except for *The Pet of the Petticoats*, the only novelties announced before the arrival of the long-prayed-for stars were "an interesting drama called the DENOUNCER" in which Smith, Lyne, and Miss Petrie appeared, and a new farce, *The Mummy* or *The Liquor of Life* in which "Old Sol" played Toby Trump. But all this was merely marking time. There was nothing else to do until the river opened up. At last, after the dreary weeks of waiting, this happy event came about and Smith lost no time in speeding the good news to Mobile.

Sunday, 12 o'clock, March 4 The ice is going!! Jubilate! Santissima!!—It is snowing too, thick and fast—but it may snow and be—, nothing *now* can stop the ice—go it must!

Mat's Benefit Wedy. was \$114—*Cinderella* (Thursday) \$91—Miss Petrie's Benefit, Friday, \$195—and mine, Saty. \$152.—We consider the receipts immense.²⁸

While waiting for the Lewises, Smith made up his accounts, "an estimate of our beautiful business up to Tuesday night last—7 weeks," for the instruction of Ludlow. The details are, I think, interesting, especially in comparison with the emolument paid stock actors today. I shall, therefore, give them in full, except for the amounts paid the individual members of the orchestra. It will be noted that the figures given are for each week.

²⁸ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, March 4, 1838, Smith Collection.

SALARIES OF ACTORS

M. Field.....	\$30.00	Rose.....	\$15.00
Lyne and wife.....	40.00	Miss Petrie.....	30.00
Brunton and wife.....	30.00	West.....	15.00
Henry and wife.....	40.00	McBride.....	12.00
Rice.....	20.00	Mrs. Foster.....	10.00
Munden.....	18.00	Mrs. Mueller.....	10.00
Miss Slocum.....	6.00	Rogers.....	15.00
Total.....			\$291.00

ORCHESTRA

Mueller.....	\$ 40.00
Players.....	148.50
Total.....	\$188.50

OFFICES, HOUSE, &C.

Jas. Forster [painter].....	\$ 30.00
Two carpenters.....	34.00
De Gentzen.....	12.00
Joseph (fireman and doorkeeper).....	8.00
Antoine (boy to assist lamps).....	5.00
Charles (messenger and call boy).....	3.00
2 Doors.....	12.00
Bill Striker and backdoor.....	8.00
Night hands (average).....	20.00
Lidyard.....	12.00
Total.....	\$ 144.00
Constable.....	\$ 3.00
Lights.....	100.00
Printing.....	60.00
Advertising.....	3.00
Properties.....	15.00
Coal.....	8.00
Stationery.....	2.00
Sundries (at least).....	20.00
Total.....	\$ 211.00
Smith's board.....	5.00
Grand total.....	\$ 839.50
Grand total for seven weeks.....	\$5,876.50
Receipts.....	2,919.00
Loss.....	2,957.00

The fifty cent discrepancy in Smith's final figure may well be forgiven him. More interesting is the surprising fact that the Henrys were receiving a combined salary equal to that of the Lyne's despite the fact that Lyne was a pseudo-star; the reason probably lay in the respective values of the wives. To his statement Smith appended the following note:

You will see I have put every thing down at the very lowest sum—and have not included in the estimate the cost of Stoves and fitting them up. . . . I allow nothing for ourselves for management or acting—nor a cent for *rent*—and yet our *actual* expenses are \$140 per night—and this before the arrival of the Lewis' family, which adds \$83 per week to our expenses.—Add *rent*—\$250—and a Salary for me, say \$30—and our actual nightly expenses will be a fraction over \$200 a night. You may think the item for Lights is too high, but it is not—it has actually cost us this amount—We have done without a Tailor, and also without a ticket seller, rather dispensing with the Violincello in the Orchestra than add the price of a man in the office.²⁹

The same letter contains an item concerning the city's most vocal, if self-constituted, dramatic critic.

I am not certain whether I wrote you that Dr. Prefontaine was kicking up a noise while we were playing *Hamlet*—rolling on the Bar Room floor, singing—I went up and ordered him to leave the house. He felt himself monstrously insulted—threatened to withdraw his “*patronage*,” and all that. Next day he professed repentance, and all that—not to me, for I have never spoken to him since he was fined by the Mayor—and is now revenging himself by writing against us in the Republican—He signs himself *Julius*. He finds out that the “Pet of the Petticoats” is immoral—that it cuts at religion, and d—I knows what.

This is the last we shall hear of the virtuous doctor for some time, as he soon departed for the West. A year later, however, he was back and applying for the position of clerk in the Theatre. I do not think he got it. Some years after this he became involved in a notorious highway robbery and murder

²⁹ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, March 8, 1838, *ibid.*

in Kansas, for complicity in which he was sentenced to death, his life being saved, however, through presidential clemency.³⁰

On March 9, the winter siege of the theatre came to a thrice-welcome end. The weather was beautiful, and, what was vastly more important, the river was open. Boats could once more reach the beleaguered city. One of them brought the first stars of the season, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lewis, who had been held up for two weeks at Cape Girardeau. They appeared Saturday, March 10, the lady playing both Julia in *The Hunchback* and, after a grand overture by Mueller's orchestra, Caroline Gayton in *Catching an Heiress* to the Tom Twigg, with songs, of her husband. During the ensuing week, the following pieces served as vehicles to display the talents of the Lewis family: *The Stranger*, after which "the celebrated *pas de deux*" from *La Juive* was danced by Mrs. Lewis and her child, "La Petite Bertha"; *The French Spy*, for the first time in St. Louis, during which the star performed "her celebrated Wild Arab Dance"; *Richard III* with the ambitious lady as the misshapen tyrant to the Richmond of Mat Field, the King Henry of Lyne, the Buckingham of Decius Rice, and the Lady Anne of Eliza Petrie; and, finally, for their benefit and advertised as the "1st time in America" the melodrama of *The Death Token* in which Mrs. Lewis played Mariette; Lyne, Count Felix; Mat Field, Belair; and Eliza Petrie, Laurette.³¹ Besides these tragedies, there were of course also the usual curtain-raisers and afterpieces, and a great variety of fancy dances by Mrs. Lewis and "La Petite Bertha."³²

³⁰ *Daily Mo. Rep.*, September 26, 1843; April 29, August 17, October 23, 1844. Captain James Hobbs, *Wild Life in the Far West*, pp. 465-67.

³¹ Dr. Odell asserts (*op. cit.*, IV, 648) that *The Death Token* produced at the Chatham Theatre, New York, in July, 1843, with Mrs. Lewis in the cast, was merely *The Floating Beacon* rechristened. Most of the characters also were re-named, but Mariette remained unchanged.

³² *Mo. Rep.*, March 10-17, 1838.

Writing to Ludlow on March 13, Smith says: "I am glad to say *the tide has turned at last*—Our Saturday's house . . . was \$241 and last night \$258.50."³³ From the next letter of the series, dated March 18, we learn that the horrendous prospect of a female Richard had evidently not outraged the theatregoing public since "the monstrosity," as Ludlow regarded all such impersonations, drew the largest house of the season.³⁴ In this same letter Smith reports that he has announced a re-engagement of the entire Lewis family for three nights. As a matter of fact, they were under contract for the remainder of the season. But it was good strategy to feature them first as stars; then, not only would the management benefit by the light they shed, ostensibly for a few nights only, but their retention as regular members of the company would be the more impressive. "Mrs. Lewis," Smith observes, "improves upon the people. At the fall of the curtain when she played *Bianca* there were at least 6 good rounds of applause." He has words of praise too for Mueller, who "wrote *music* (all the parts) of the *Death Token*—and all the parts (from a sketch I provided him) of 'Age Tomorrow'—in less than 48 hours. He is a full team—and without any kind of doubt the best leader in America!"

While awaiting the arrival of his other stars, Smith marked time, relying largely upon those pieces which had proved themselves safely popular, Mrs. Lewis, now a regular member of the company, assuming the leading rôles in lieu of the overtaxed Miss Petrie.

In addition to standard tragedies, the management whiled away the time with two pieces which were entirely new to St. Louis, the "burletta" of *The Deep, Deep Sea* or *The Great American Sea Serpent*, and the "new drama of *The Vision of Home*." For a description of the former masterpiece, which had been for several years a prime favorite in New York, I am indebted to Dr. Odell's invaluable *Annals*.

³³ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, March 13-14, 1838, Smith Collection.

³⁴ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, March 18, 1838, *ibid.*

This particular bit of Fooling employed the sea serpent alleged to have been seen recently along the New England coast, and forced him to announce himself to the tune of Yankee Doodle. Exquisite parodies of *Non piu mesta*, *Di tanti palpiti*, and other favourite operatic airs, mingled with Ride a Cock-horse to Banbury Cross, or Oh, What a Row, What a Rumpus and a Rioting, as musical setting for the absurd quarrels of Neptune, Amphitrite and Cassiope, and the rescue of Andromeda by Perseus from the dread sea serpent.³⁵

This humorous extravaganza ran to five almost consecutive performances. This was surely a stroke of luck since, according to the resident manager, the production, "dresses, tail and all" cost less than \$25.00.

It went smoothly, and is done very well—*every dress new*—the ladies find their own (of course), and the rest are shirts trimmed with green—pasteboard golden crowns—tin tridents—worsted for green hair &—and the scenery consists of a flat composed of coral wings (which takes six)—3 coral wings each side, and two rock wings—the coral drop hoisted up above the flat—so as to match—the Sea Serpent *gets over the flat and comes down a rope*, instead of the usual way of having winding stairs—the last scene—Coral Scene of Cinderella, without the waters.³⁶

Absurd as this entertainment was, does it not suggest some of the extravaganzas with which more recent and, presumably, more sophisticated playgoers have been regaled?

Still the stars held off, two of them afraid to risk the bad business. Yet matters were going much better. The first night of *The Deep, Deep Sea*, together with *The Death Token*, the receipts were \$217.50. And this amount was exceeded twice during the week, *The Female Brigand* and *The Two Gregories* having attracted \$312.00 into the managerial coffers and the same melodrama coupled with *Is He Jealous* \$243.50. "It is plain enough," Smith wrote Ludlow, "that the receipts vary according to the *arrival* and *departure* of the boats—and it is not the citizens who support the Theatre when it is sup-

³⁵ Odell, *op. cit.*, IV, 11.

³⁶ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, March 24-26, 1838, Smith Collection.

ported."³⁷ The suggestion that St. Louis had in 1838 sufficient of a transient population to keep the theatre on its feet is provocative. It is regrettable that it is today impossible either to corroborate Smith's diagnosis or to disprove it, there being extant no record of the arrivals of the various steamboats to reach the city during that month.

At last, on April 12, to the inexpressible joy of Smith "the glorious Ellen Tree" arrived on the "Prairie" and the next morning he had the pleasure of escorting her up to her hotel while the passers-by feasted their eyes on the unwonted spectacle of a truly famous actress treading their narrow streets. The public interest could not fail to gratify Smith, for business had begun to fall off again and he was counting on his new star to save him from further disaster. And she was beyond the peradventure of a doubt a star of the very first magnitude. If she could not fill the long-empty seats, then no one could. She was then, in her middle-thirties, on her first and, probably, most successful American tour. In a letter written to Smith some years later, shortly before her first tour with her husband, Charles Kean, she said she had been in 1838 "a Queen of Trumps," and so her St. Louis manager certainly regarded her. As he had anticipated, she sought on her arrival to be released from half her engagement of fourteen nights. But he had waited too long for the relief she brought, and he declined to agree to any such change in her contract, verbal though it was.³⁸ She was, however, announced for only seven nights, and her re-engagement was made to appear the result of her great success. This strategy, by the way, is by no means unknown to our modern managers.

A great success her engagement undoubtedly was, especially by comparison with what had gone before. Yet the circumstances attending her *début* were scarcely auspicious. The day was not only Friday the thirteenth, but Good Friday to boot, and the evening was both cold and rainy. In a

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 13, 1838, *ibid.*

largely Catholic community, little could be expected on such a night. Nevertheless, the receipts were \$505.00, and Smith was jubilant. The bill was composed of *The Hunchback*, in which of course the visitor made her bow, and Sheridan's *The Critic*. Saturday the management took in but \$411.50. After that, however, Lent being over, there was a change, and she played to excellent business, especially during her first "engagement." The *Republican* spoke of her acting in glowing terms, and noted with satisfaction that the élite were patronizing the theatre. Playing fourteen nights, including two benefits, she gave the St. Louisans ample opportunity to enjoy and judge her widely heralded artistry. She was seen as the heroines of the following works: *The Honey Moon*, *The Wife*, *Macbeth*, *The Belle's Stratagem*, *The Love Chase* (twice), *The Stranger*, *Romeo and Juliet* (to the Romeo of Mrs. Lewis), *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Perfection* (twice), and *The Barrack Room*, and also twice as the hero of Talfourd's *Ion*, one of her greatest parts. Her last appearance, like her first, was in *The Hunchback*.³⁹ Reviews of her performances are wanting, De Prefontaine having gone West, but from frequent editorial encomiums in the *Republican* it would seem that she came up to the most sanguine expectations. Smith's hopes too were probably realized. For her first benefit the entire lower circle and a great part of the second were sold early in the day, and the receipts mounted to the record figure of \$965.25. "Miss Tree's receipts for her 7 nights," reported Smith on April 21, "have been \$1,552.43. Pretty well, I think for 7 nights acting—*Our* share has amounted to just \$350 and a fraction a night."⁴⁰ The total income from the re-engagement was \$3,119.00 of which \$2,009.50 went to the firm."⁴¹ Matters were now so promising

³⁹ The names of these plays are taken from the *Republican*, April 13-28, and from Smith's letters to Ludlow.

⁴⁰ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 21, 1838, Smith Collection.

⁴¹ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 23, 1838, *ibid.*

that Smith was able to pay off some of the debts and also to send Ludlow \$1,000.00 by the clerk of the "Prairie."

There is little else to report concerning Miss Tree's visit, but it is interesting to know that she declared the *Macbeth* music, as performed under the direction of the talented Mueller, as well done as she had ever heard it out of London, and also that the costumes for *Ion* (in which Eliza Petrie played Clemanthe; Lyne, Adrastus; and Field, Phocion) cost all of \$15.00. Moreover, Lyne appeared upon the stage one evening in such a state of inebriation that he was all but hissed from the stage and was saved from dismissal only by the generous intercession of the star whose scene he had ruined.⁴²

With the departure of Miss Tree, Smith apparently succumbed to the whooping cough, and there ensued a hiatus in his correspondence as well as, it would seem, in his management. Miss Tree was to have been succeeded by "Jim Crow" Rice, and the celebrated negro-impersonator actually came to St. Louis, despite the fact that Smith had refused to meet his terms, "divide after \$150 and half Benefit."⁴³ But on arriving he fell ill and was unable to fill his engagement at that time. Providentially, however, two other stars put in an unexpected appearance, and were promptly engaged. These were the comedian John Sefton and the popular Clara Fisher, now Mrs. Maeder, one of the few child prodigies whose appeal did not disappear with maturity. Both artists contracted to share after \$300.00, and each was to have a clear half benefit.⁴⁴ Sefton opened in *The Golden Farmer* on the last day of the month, and was followed the next evening by Mrs. Maeder in *Wives as They Were* and *The Actress of All Work*. On May 2 they acted together in *A Dream of the Future* and *The Swiss Cottage*. The next two evenings were given over to *Kate Kearney*, with her, and *The Loan of a*

⁴² Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 29, 1838, *ibid.*

⁴³ Smith offered to divide after \$250. Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 15, 1838, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 29, 1838, *ibid.*

Lover with them both. On Saturday, May 5, the comedian took his benefit, with his fellow-star "volunteering," but in what plays I cannot tell, Smith being unable to write and there being no paper of that date extant. They said their farewells on Monday when *The Barrack Room*, *The Two Queens*, and *The Welsh Girl* were offered for Mrs. Maeder's benefit. There is no evidence that this joint engagement was a great success. Coming immediately after Ellen Tree, even Mrs. Maeder's light was dimmed and she was not, as the *Republican* put it, "the young sylph-like being we were wont to consider her in former times."⁴⁵ However, the writer added gallantly, "but neither years nor marriage have had the power to destroy her ability to please. She is still fascinating and interesting." After these two stars came Mrs. Gibbs, an English songstress, for three not very profitable nights. In what piece she made her local *début* I do not know, but on May 9 she sang Julia Mannering in *Rob Roy*, and the following evening Clari, and also played in *The Idiot Witness*.⁴⁶

Now, once more there was a change in the tide, and again the coffers of Ludlow and Smith were filled. The attraction responsible for this happy situation was the famous Ravel family, acrobats extraordinary and one of the most potent drawing-cards in the contemporary theatre. The advertisement in the *Republican* of May 11 announced that the "family" consisted of "the following performers": Gabriel, Javelly, Antoine, Jerome, Dominique, François, and Tony Jean Ravel, Eugene Fenellon, Madame Jerome Ravel, Mademoiselle Adela Ravel, Madame Eugene Fenellon, and Mademoiselle Elizabeth Ravel. Opening on the evening of that day, they gave ten performances composed of tight-rope walking, pantomimes, and *tableaux vivants*, usually preceded by farces acted by the regular stock company. Of their reception, the *Republican* of May 16 had this to say:

⁴⁵ *Mo. Rep.*, May 2, 1838.

⁴⁶ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 13, 1838, Smith Collection; also, *Mo. Rep.*, May 10, 1838.

THE RAVELS are drawing immense houses at the St. Louis Theatre, and thunders of applause.—The Theatre-going mania has not raged to a greater extent here since the Theatre opened, except during Miss Tree’s engagement, when, as now, every one went who could raise the wind.

With the departure of this agile family, the winter season was virtually over, though the actual closing was deferred until May 30 to provide time for the necessary benefits. Of these little need be said save that for his afterpiece Mat Field offered “a new Farce, written by a gentleman of St. Louis, entitled *THE BEE HIVE*,”⁴⁷ and that for theirs the Lynes gave *Pizarro* with “Mr. Palmer, formerly of the Southern and Western, and late of the National Theatre, Boston” in the title rôle.⁴⁸ This Palmer was the individual who had been here in the Caldwell-Ludlow troupe in 1828 and whom Smith detested as a friend of his brother’s murderer. In his autobiography he asserts that Palmer came to St. Louis, “a poor drunken wretch,” borrowed five dollars, and died in a ditch.⁴⁹

I am sorry that I cannot close this chapter with its record of hardships and misfortunes on a cheerful note. But the winter of Smith’s discontent was not yet over. The last benefit, Eliza Petrie’s, was staged May 30. Five days later, the manager, to quote his own words, experienced “the greatest misfortune of his life” in the death of his wife, Martha Matthews Smith, the leading lady of his barnstorming days and one of the pioneer actresses of the St. Louis theatre.

⁴⁷ *Mo. Rep.*, May 26, 1838.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, May 23, 1838.

⁴⁹ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

CHAPTER XII

A SEASON OF SPECTACLES, 1838

COMING after the events chronicled in the last chapter, the summer, or, as Ludlow calls it, the fall season of 1838 is apt to prove more than tame in the telling. Yet it was not without its points of interest. Unfortunately there is no such wealth of material relating to it as that upon which I was able to draw for the account of the winter season. Both members of the firm being upon the scene, no correspondence, of course, passed between them, and the newspapers, at least those of which I have discovered files, contribute little beyond the paid advertisements and occasional brief editorial comments. Criticisms are very scarce. Nor is there a great deal of information to be derived from the memoirs of the partners. Yet it is possible to make out a survey of the course of events.

According to Smith, the season began on Wednesday, June 6.¹ Originally advertised for the preceding Monday, it was doubtless postponed because of the death of Mrs. Smith on that day. The company was a much stronger one than that which had so sorely tried the temper of young Mat Field. To begin with, both Ludlow and Smith were on hand to appear from time to time in their favorite rôles in high and low comedy, respectively. J. M. Field donned the sock and buskin lately worn by Lyne, and his wife, "late Miss Riddle," was seen a few times in suitable rôles, until approaching motherhood enforced her retirement. Mrs. Lewis was retained for the leading business except during the visits of women stars, and her husband played low-comedy rôles and also served, to Smith's great satisfaction at least, as stage manager. Miss Petrie and Mat Field, of course, remained.

¹ Smith, *Theatrical Management*, p. 134.

Others of the winter company who were held over were Rice, Brunton, Munden, Henry, Forster, and Rose (the prompter), Mrs. Brunton, Mrs. Henry, Mrs. Forster, and La Petite Bertha, now about ten years of age. To these were added William Anderson, always useful in the "heavy" rôles, Henry Schoolcraft, a Mr. and Mrs. Davis, and two men of whom I know nothing except their surnames, Rogers and McBride. To the great regret of Smith, the firm had lost the services of Mueller, whom he regarded as the finest orchestral leader in the country, and his place had been filled by E. Wolf, sometimes spelled Woolf, who had under his direction a "band" of fourteen musicians. The advertisement referred to closed with the following announcement:

A limited number of *Season Tickets* will be offered,—payment for which must in all cases be made in advance. At the commencement of the performance of each *Star*, boxes may be secured for the whole engagement. With this exception, all the former rules of the box office will be strictly adhered to. An efficient police is engaged.

Despite their aversion to it, the managers were compelled to surrender to the starring system, and the first part of the season was dominated by the visitors. Of these, the first was the most important. This was Josephine Clifton, by that time one of the most potent of attractions both in tragedy and in comedy. She had been engaged for the winter season, but had been frightened away by reports of the disastrous turn of events. Smith had been so infuriated by what he considered her lack of good faith that for a time he had intended taking action against her, but had finally accepted her apologies and welcomed her at the beginning of the summer season.² Miss Clifton made her bow on the first night. The comedy was *The Hunchback* of unfailing popularity, followed by *The Married Rake* in which Mrs. Lewis played Mrs. Trictrac. The next evening the guest had a further opportunity to display her emotional powers as Mrs. Beverly in *The*

² Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 11, 1838, Smith Collection.

Gamester, which shared the bill with *The Young Widow*. In both pieces, Miss Clifton's vis-à-vis was Mat Field, his brother not yet having taken his place in the company. In *The Hunchback* Mrs. Lewis played Helen, and Rice, Master Walter. There is no record of the events of the next three nights, but on the twelfth, the managers offered an "Extraordinary combination of Talent!!!"³ The principal piece was *Venice Preserved* with Miss Clifton voicing the tragic lines and doubtless looking very imposing as Belvidera, J. R. Scott as Jaffier, and J. M. Field as the rebellious Pierre. With three such capable tragedians in the cast, Otway's stately periods were no doubt given with sounding effect. After so much gloom, *Raising the Wind*, with J. M. Field, must have come as a relief. This was the second and last night of Scott's starring engagement and also Field's second appearance.

On the occasion of Miss Clifton's benefit, June 13, St. Louis first made the acquaintance of Bulwer-Lytton's *The Lady of Lyons*, a piece destined to become one of the most popular comedies of the century. Both Ludlow and Smith in their recollections assert that this was the first performance of the play in the United States,⁴ but they are clearly in error, since it had been produced at the Park Theatre in New York just a month previous.⁵ The Claude of the evening was an Englishman by the name of Barton, first name unknown, who had played with Smith in the South and also been seen occasionally on the New York stage. According to Ludlow, Colonel Damas was enacted by Vincent De Camp, but we have already seen that the old comedian died a month later in Texas, and so I think it is quite out of the question that he was in St. Louis at this time. Nor does his name appear in the roster of the company published in the *Republican*, and I have found no other reference to his presence in St. Louis at

³ *Mo. Rep.*, June 12, 1838.

⁴ Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, p. 503; Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁵ Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, IV, 205. It had also been given in Boston on May 24 (Clapp, *Record of the Boston Stage*, p. 354).

this time. The afterpiece which followed *The Lady of Lyons* was *Perfection*, in which both the stars of the evening took part, and in which they said their adieux to St. Louis. Of the success of his first star, Ludlow has this to say: "Miss Clifton's engagement in St. Louis was fairly attended, although many persons drew unfavorable comparisons between her and Miss Tree." Scott, he thinks, opened in *Damon and Pythias*, and also played Virginius, Richard III, Sir Giles Overreach, "and other leading characters." I do not, however, see how he can have compassed so many rôles. As I said above, his appearance in *Venice Preserved* was advertised as his second and last. Such an announcement does not, of course, preclude the possibility of a "re-engagement," but there is only one evening unaccounted for. Of this tragedian's talents, Ludlow entertained a high opinion. "He was an actor of the Forrest style, yet not a servile imitator of him."⁶ He even feels that, had he not fallen victim to dissipation, he might have proved a serious rival of the great Philadelphian.

After the departure of Miss Clifton and Scott, Mrs. Gibbs returned "for six nights only," of course plus a benefit. With a singer of her gifts, a revival of *Cinderella* was inevitable, and it materialized June 15, her first night. Since the cast showed certain interesting changes, I shall give it in full: The Prince, Brunton; Dandini, J. M. Field, instead of "Old Sol"; the Baron, Mat Field; Cinderella, Mrs. Gibbs; the Fairy Queen, Mrs. Lewis; and Clorinda, Mrs. Brunton. There can be little question that this was the best performance the piece had as yet enjoyed in St. Louis. It was repeated the following evening. Bellini's *La Sonnambula* also was given twice with Mrs. Gibbs as Amina, Brunton as Elvino, J. M. Field as Rodolfo, Schoolcraft as Alessio, and Mrs. Brunton as Liza. Needless to say, it was sung in English. The advertisement in the *Republican* of June 19 states that the principals were to be "sustained by a full and effective chorus,

⁶ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

composed of every member of the company." It is interesting to note that in such choruses even the managers themselves were not above taking part. On June 20 Mrs. Field made the first of her few appearances, in *Lucille* on the same bill with Mrs. Gibbs in *The Cherry Tree*. In what the latter was seen, or perhaps I should say heard, on the last night of her regular engagement I do not know, but for her farewell benefit she participated in three different pieces, *The Grenadier*, *La Son-nambula*, "in consequence of several applications," and "an entirely new, very original, and exceedingly improbable Burlesque Burletta . . . called OLYMPIC DEVILS."⁷

Newspaper records are lacking of what occurred in the theatre during the ensuing fortnight, but apparently Miss Nelson and her husband Hodges, the singers, occupied the center of the stage, since both Ludlow and Smith refer to their presence at this time. The former asserts that Miss Nelson sang the Fairy Papillo and Hodges the Prince in *Cinderella*. "These additions were both improvements to the opera since its previous representations in this city, and the public seemed to appreciate it."⁸

Independence Day was celebrated with a revival of *The Forty Thieves*, with Smith as Ali Baba, preceded by *A Wife's First Lesson* (*The Day after the Wedding*), in which Ludlow and Eliza Riddle Field took part. Then came Mrs. Stuart, formerly Mary Vos, the daughter of the leader of the Thespians twenty years before. Her engagement was but a brief one, not more than five nights including the benefit. She played Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons* to the Claude of J. M. Field. The following night saw her as Cephania in "the Grand Romantic drama of the AETHIOPE or the Child of the Desert," Joe Field filling the title rôle and his wife that of Orasmyn. On July 10, there was a revival of *Adrian and Orilla* with the star as Madame Clermont, Mrs. Lewis as Lothaire, Miss Petrie as Orilla, and the Field brothers as Adrian and the Prince. For Mrs. Stuart's benefit, the next

⁷ *Mo. Rep.*, June 22, 1838.

⁸ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

evening, "the Celebrated Melo-Dramatic Romance" of *Joan of Arc* was mounted, of course with her as the Maid of Orleans. For the occasion Mat Field donned the royal robes of Charles of France and Miss Petrie appeared as Lucille, whoever that lady may have been. History was then put aside, and the star gave the familiar recitation, "The Scolding Wife Reclaimed," and closed the proceedings as Louisa in *The Dead Shot*, with Schoolcraft as Hector Timid. Concerning Mrs. Stuart's proficiency as an actress, Ludlow, who knew her well and in whose home she later died, states that she "displayed considerable capabilities for the profession, but was lacking in polish and refinement."⁹ During the course of her stay in St. Louis, Mrs. Field took her benefit and made her last appearance of the year in a dramatization of Bulwer's *Leila*, her husband playing Almamen, and *The Handsome Husband*.¹⁰

Now, on the day after Mrs. Stuart's farewell, came Mrs. Eliza Shaw, an English actress who had been meeting with considerable success in the same repertory as Ellen Tree and who, years later, was widely known as Mrs. Hamblin. Her engagement, which was, except for Josephine Clifton's, the most important of the season, opened July 12 with *Fazio*. This was followed the next evening by *The Love Chase*, a comedy by Sheridan Knowles, in which she played Constance, supported by Miss Petrie as Lydia and Mat Field as Wildrake. On Saturday she emulated Miss Tree's example by playing the male rôle of Ion in Talfourd's popular "new tragedy," with the same two young players in the other rôles. The following week she opened in *The Lady of Lyons*, the third Pauline in as many performances. There was a third Claude too in the person of Mat Field, who, I should think, with his dark hair and fine eyes, must have been well-suited to the part. The next evening the star did double

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 509.

¹⁰ The information concerning these bills was found in the *Missouri Republican*, June 5-11, 1838.

duty, playing Agnes de Vere in the domestic drama of the same name or *The Wife's Revenge* with Mat Field as De Vere, Schoolcraft as Oliver Dobbs, and Miss Petrie as Kitty, and also Madge Wildfire in a melodramatic version of *The Heart of Midlothian*, Mrs. Lewis being the Jeanie and Miss Petrie the Effie Deans. The next performance was advertised as her last, and again she assumed two rôles: Jane Shore in Rowe's tragedy of penitence and retribution, J. M. Field being Hastings; and Ernestine in the non-operatic *Somnambulist*. Of greater interest is her benefit bill, composed of *Hamlet* and, by way of variety, *The Sultan* or *A Peep into the Seraglio*—rather a full evening that. In the former she herself donned the sables of the melancholy prince; this circumstance I should think can scarcely have enhanced the merits of the performance, but perhaps after the Richard III of Mrs. Lewis it seemed mild. The advertisement in the *Republican* (July 19) shows a new alignment of characters: the Ghost, J. M. Field; the King, Anderson; Horatio, Mat Field; the Queen, Mrs. Lewis; Ophelia, Miss Petrie. In the afterpiece Sol Smith appeared as Osmyn and Mat Field as the Sultan. It is to be regretted that we have no news of this performance.

By this time the temperature was soaring, the *Republican* of that day reporting that "the thermometer in the center of the Merchants Exchange stood at 94. It has been varying at about this for several days." This would hardly seem to be weather to encourage theatrical enterprise. Yet the managers announced the re-engagement of Mrs. Shaw, an arrangement doubtless made some time before. After a hiatus of one night, the lady exhibited to theatre-minded St. Louisans her conception of Julia in *The Hunchback*; in this she had excellent support, J. M. Field as Clifford, Ludlow as Master Modus, Mat Field as Master Walter, and Miss Petrie as Helen. The next evening, she turned to *The Belle's Stratagem*, again with uncommonly strong support: Doricourt, Ludlow; Flutter, J. M. Field; Saville, Schoolcraft; Sir George, Mat Field; the Widow Rachel, Mrs. Lewis; Lady Frances, Miss Petrie. I doubt if



ELIZA RIDDLE (MRS. JOSEPH M. FIELD)

(From a photograph in the possession of Miss Cornelia Maury)

this comedy, then so greatly admired, had ever been better played in St. Louis. Of much greater interest today, however, are the two pieces which followed on July 24 and 25, respectively, *As You Like It* and *King John*, both comparative novelties so far as St. Louis was concerned; indeed the latter had never been done here before. In the comedy, Mrs. Shaw both played Rosalind and sang "the celebrated cuckoo song"; J. M. Field was the Orlando, a part I should think better suited to the younger and more romantic looking Mat, and Mr. Lewis emerged from the obscurity of stage manager in the cap and bells of Touchstone. In the chronicle-history, Mrs. Shaw was, of course, the Constance; J. M. Field, the King John. The Arthur, according to the advertisement in the *Republican* of July 25 was "Master Shaw," his first "appearance"; presumably this was the star's son, but I have been unable to find any other reference to him.

The first half of the season was now almost at an end. There remained but three nights. I have found no reference to the activities of July 26, but do know that the next evening Mrs. Shaw, playing Euphrasia in *The Grecian Daughter*, shared the bill with a juvenile ventriloquist named Platt, who later performed elsewhere in the city. After the visitor's benefit, July 28, on which occasion she was seen in *The Love Chase* and *The Youthful Queen*, the curtain was rung down and the building turned over to the carpenters, who were to make it ready for the greatest sensation of the summer season.

In my survey of the past two months, I have passed over most of the farces and petit comedies which served as curtain-raisers and afterpieces to the more important tragedies and comedies. For the most part, they were old friends like *No Song, No Supper*, *33 John St.*, and *The Deep, Deep Sea*. There were, however, a few which were less familiar, for instance *The Village Lawyer*, on July 14, in which Lewis played Scout, and *Our Mary Anne*, which was first seen a week later with the following cast: Jonathan Funk, Mat Field; Captain Albert, Brunton; Solomon, Lewis; Ernestine, Miss Petrie; and

Mary Anne, Mrs. Brunton.¹¹ This little farce must have "caught on," for it was given three times more before the close of the season.

On July 30, the *Republican* printed an announcement to the effect that the Theatre would remain closed until August 9, when it would reopen with the "Grand Romantic Drama" of *Mazeppa* or *The Wild Horse of Tartary* in which "Mr. Lewellen and his celebrated horse Timon [*sic*]" were to appear.

During the actors' vacation, the only dramatic entertainments offered for the delectation of the citizens were apparently three performances by the students of St. Louis University on the occasion of their eighth annual examination. These were a translation in English verse of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and a two-act Spanish play *El Sitio de Colchester*. These were presented on the evening of August 7, to be followed the next evening by the French melodrama of *L'Orphelin et le Meurtrier*. It is interesting to note that the *dramatis personae*, as printed in the programs now preserved in a scrapbook at St. Louis University, contain no female characters.¹²

On August 9, in accordance with the promise of the managers, Lewellen and his horse made their *début* in "The Grand Drama of MAZEPPA," with Mrs. Lewis as Olinska. Also in the cast was the inevitable Eliza Petrie, but there is some confusion concerning the rôle she filled. The melodrama was repeated on the two evenings following its first performance, and on the ensuing Monday. The advertisement in the *Republican* of March 11 casts her as Oneiza, but that in the *Daily Argus* of August 16, when the piece was repeated once more for Lewellen's benefit, has her down for Zemila.¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.*, July 12-28, 1838.

¹² The scrapbook compiled by Father Gilbert J. Garraghan contains programs which refer to dialogues on the examination programs as early as 1831, but there is no evidence that these first dialogues were acted out. The program for 1838, however, refers to the feature discussed here as "the Representation of a Drama."

¹³ The name is misspelled in the advertisement.

The production appears to have met with a favorable reception. On August 10 the *Republican* praised it highly, adding that it "should be witnessed to realize to the full extent the interest it possesses," and next day the same paper stated that it had been playing to crowded houses. Two days later the editor asserted that the horse alone was worth the price of admission. At each of the first four performances it was preceded by a different farce, *My Aunt*, *33 John St.*, *My Fellow Clerk*, and *The Mummy*, in the last two of which Lewellen took part.

Mazeppa being a success, the re-engagement of Mr. Lewellen and "his beautiful *Horse*" was announced in the papers of August 14. They were to be seen in another "Grand Drama," *Timour the Tartar*, the cast and description of which I subjoin:

TIMOUR THE TARTAR

Timour	Mr. J. M. Field
Georgian Chief	Mr. Lewellen
Zorilda	Mrs. Lewis
Liska	Miss Petrie

IN ACT I.—Grand Procession. Zorilda ENTERS ON HORSEBACK. Combat by Kerim and Sambaleet—Kerim being disarmed, the HORSE RESTORES HIM HIS SWORD! Sambaleet stabs the horse, WHO FALLS AS DEAD!

IN ACT 3.—The Georgian Chief, mounted on his Steed, rescues Zorilda from the waters into which she has plunged—then dashes up a *tremendous cataract* and rescues the Prince Agil, who is about to be thrown from a high Tower which projects over the *Waterfall*.¹⁴

On perusing this advertisement, one does not wonder that it took the carpenters ten days to equip the Theatre for such spectacles as these. But I think one also hesitates to lament the decadence of our drama today and its fall from its high estate in "the Palmy Days," which somehow are always the days-before-yesterday.

¹⁴*Mo. Rep.*, August 14, 1838.

Timour had three performances, the first two with inconsequential farces, the last with *Mazeppa* for Lewellen's farewell benefit. Except for a brief return engagement of Mrs. Stuart, the starring season was now over. It was not easy to lure the bright luminaries of the stage to the western edge of civilization. Travel was too painful, and those celebrities who were willing to put themselves out would do so only for a compensation which the thrifty managers considered out of all reason and refused to pay. So Ludlow and Smith fell back on the usual last resort in time of trouble, spectacular melodrama with breath-taking scenic effects.

But first there were a few benefits to be got out of the way. Mat Field took his first in a venerable favorite, no other than *Douglas*, playing Young Norval; his brother undertook Old Norval; to Mrs. Lewis, of course, fell the woes of Lady Randolph; and to "a Young Gentleman of St. Louis," the villainies of Glenalvon. Mrs. Lewis and La Petite Bertha favored with a *pas de deux*, and, finally, Ludlow played Mr. Peter Perkins in "an entire new farce, called WHAT HAVE I DONE?" Miss Petrie's evening was devoted to *The Englishman in India*, in which she was Sally Scraggs; J. M. Field, Tom Tape; Mat Field, Colonel Oswald; Schoolcraft, Count Glorieux; and Mrs. Lewis, Gulnare; and *Perfection* with Ludlow as Charles Paragon and herself as Kate O'Brien, with songs.

On August 20 J. M. Field brought Shakespeare again to the stage with *Richard III*, doubtless in the Cibber version, and rounded the evening off with his own *Tourists in America*, playing Tristram to Eliza Petrie's Phoebe. The next evening, Mrs. Lewis appeared as Catherine de Medici in a play which piques my curiosity, *Crighton* or *The Admirable Scot*, J. M. Field in the title rôle and Miss Petrie as Geneva. This curiosity is largely due to the fact that Dr. Odell does not record its production in New York up to this time, and it was rare indeed for St. Louis to see a piece before the theatrical metropolis. Nor is the notice in the *Republican* of much assistance, since it does not give the name of the author but

merely identifies it as a new play, and states that this was to be its only performance. After it was over, whatever it was, Ludlow again played Peter Perkins.

On Wednesday, August 22, after the farce version of *Damon and Pythias*, the managers played a trump card—the first and the most successful of three great spectacles, *Peter Wilkins* or *The Flying Islanders*. Its reception probably surpassed their expectations, for it achieved during the remaining weeks of the season the record total of no fewer than eleven performances; not even *Cinderella* had done so well in a single season. The rôle of Peter himself fell to Mrs. Lewis; her husband playing the Wild Man; J. M. Field played Phe-
lim O'Scud; Mat Field, Nicholas Crowquill; and Miss Petrie, Yourakee.¹⁵ The piece was given on five successive evenings, Sunday, of course, not counted, and then was seen again off and on until October 6, when it was finally shelved for the winter.

Next in favor was *The Miller and His Men* or *The Bohemian Robber*, first staged on September 4, which had five performances. In this Mrs. Lewis was seen as Ravina, Miss Petrie as Claudine, J. M. Field as Grindoff, and Sol Smith as Kael.¹⁶ This piece elicited on September 7 a long communication to the *Republican* from a writer who signed himself "zzz." Parts of it may throw some light on the nature of the performance. He begins by praising the play itself, stating that it is not one of the usual "modern spectacles, a mere heap of rubbish and inflated nonsense terminated by some grand 'tableau vivant,' as absurd in meaning as it is ridiculous in appearance." He then goes on:

I have not time to speak of particular persons to much extent; but I cannot avoid calling my readers attention to Mr. Sol Smith's acting in this piece.—People are accustomed to say of any thing

¹⁵ The *Missouri Republican* of August 22, 1838, from which this cast was taken, makes, I am quite sure, an error in assigning Peter to Mr. Lewis and the Wild Man to his wife. All the other issues give the cast as I have given it, and so do the advertisements in the *Daily Argus* of corresponding dates.

¹⁶ *Mo. Rep.*, September 4, 1838.

that is really well acted; "Oh! that's no acting—that's himself." But I presume that if these persons could see this identical "old Sol" between every two scenes, scolding the property-man, calling the call-boy, lecturing the prompter, and setting the carpenters "to rights," they would begin to believe, what in regard to acting, is really the fact; that the most cunning delusions is [*sic*] that which induces you to believe you are not deluded.

After bestowing encomiums upon Mrs. Lewis, Miss Petrie and the Fields, "zzz" concludes his critique with the following interesting comment:

I remark one thing in the getting up of this piece which is worthy of all praise; the presence of a good and efficient chorus, Messrs. Ludlow, Schoolcraft and Lewis, all of them good actors, did themselves as much credit by coming forward as chorus singers as if they had been enacting favorite characters. . . . In our eastern theatres, it is customary, for all the company, not otherwise required in the piece, to assist in the choruses.

Times have changed. I wonder how some of our present-day actors and actresses would react to a request to fill out a chorus.

Another production of the same general type was "the Grand Romantic Drama of the FLYING DUTCHMAN" which opened a run of four performances on September 17, with Mrs. Lewis as Vanderdecken, or "Vanderdecker" as the advertisement in the *Republican* has it. Others in the cast given in that notice are J. M. Field as Toby Varnish, Mat Field as Peter Von Bummel, and Miss Petrie as Lestelle. Of this production, I have found no review.

Popular as these spectacular pieces may have proved, of greater interest historically were some original, or nearly original, farces presented this season for the first time. On August 24, as a curtain-raiser to *Peter Wilkins*, the management staged an "original farce (by G. G. F.) called the NEW HOTEL."¹⁷ Unfortunately the paper vouchsafes us no further information concerning this trifle, and both managers omit all mention of it from their recollections. Nor have I had any

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, August 24, 1838.

luck in my endeavors to trace the author. The city directory for 1838-39 contains no name which the initials would fit, and but two G. F's., one the name of a laborer, the other of a saddler. The farce, which was perhaps inspired by the building of a new hotel, the celebrated Planter's House, evidently did not meet with approval, since it does not appear to have been repeated. More fortunate was *Jodolet*, a farce translated from the French, probably of Scarron, by René Paul, a well-known citizen of St. Louis, which achieved four performances. Just before the close of the season, on October 10 to be specific, J. M. Field offered as part of his benefit bill "a new Satirical Farce, entitled, AMALGAMATION, OR SOUTHERN VISITORS,"¹⁸ a piece of his own composition, a fact which is revealed by a later paper.¹⁹ This is the sum and substance of my information concerning this apparently short-lived work, which, like *Tourists in America*, is not included in Dr. Quinn's list of Field's plays. Why both Ludlow and Smith in writing down their theatrical chronicles flouted future historians of the stage by ignoring these original farces, I shall not undertake to say. Perhaps they had opinions of their merit. One, however, they did not ignore. This is Field's farce of *Victoria* or *The Lion and the Kiss*, in which Eliza Petrie added the British Queen to her repertory, the author played James Gordon Bennett, and his brother appeared as the Prince of Kinderhook. Ludlow says:

This piece was, as the reader may naturally suppose, a burlesque, in which Bennet [*sic*] is represented to have visited England to interview the young Queen as to her future policy toward the United States of North America. The Queen is represented as being terribly afraid of committing herself to any wrong policy while in the hands of such an able diplomatist as Bennet; and the sketch had many funny specimens of Scotch-Yankee impudence working on the fears of a timid girl. Mr. Field reserved the piece for his benefit nights, and on such occasions it was generally effective.²⁰

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, October 9, 1838.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, October 18, 1838.

²⁰ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 508.

This last statement is not correct inasmuch as the farce was given on the last two nights of the season, neither of which was Field's benefit, but we are indebted to Ludlow for even this meager information. *Victoria* is apparently no longer available; in his *History of the American Drama* Dr. Quinn lists it among the American plays no longer extant. The following June, it was given four performances at the Bowery Theatre in New York with the author again as Bennett, and from Dr. Odell's note concerning it we learn that the *dramatis personae* included, besides those mentioned in the St. Louis paper, Prince John Van Buren, the Duke of Wellington, and the Duchess of Kent.²¹

If the critic of the *Sunday Morning News* is to be believed, the little burlesque did not meet in New York with the favor accorded it in the Western cities. His report as expressed on June 16, 1839, is not exactly flattering. He found it "unre-deemed by a single ray of wit, humor or decency" and also "insulting to the good taste and sense of the community."

The rest of the summer season of 1838 may be passed over rather rapidly. It brought forward a few new pieces, the most important of which were probably Knowles's new comedy, *Woman's Wit*, and Talfourd's pseudo-classical tragedy, *The Athenian Captive*. The former was first acted on August 31, the *Republican* of which date gives the cast as follows: Sir Valentine, J. M. Field; Walsingham, Mat Field; Eustace, Mrs. Lewis; and Hero, Miss Petrie. During the course of the season it had three repetitions. *The Athenian Captive* was mounted on September 10 and three subsequent evenings. Laudatory as are the critic's opinions of the tragedy, they scarcely surpass his praises of the performance he witnessed. Mrs. Lewis as Ismene, J. M. Field as Thoas, "the noble, self-sacrificing hero," Rice as Iphitus, Mat Field as Hylus, "the gentle, loving, yet proud and high-souled youth," and Eliza Petrie as Creusa—"ah," exclaims the critic, "thy pure love is worthy a better reward than the self-sacrifice of thy lover!"

²¹ Odell, *op. cit.*, IV, 318.

—all these came in for compliments. Yet, for all this, *The Athenian Captive* was seen but three times. Perhaps the reason is to be found in an editorial in the *Daily Evening Gazette*. After conceding that *The Athenian Captive* was doubtless beautiful, the writer observes condescendingly that the “taste for Grecian letters has nearly died away” and concludes that, although the piece is doubtless beautiful, the managers have, in producing it, “complied with the tastes of the few, who yet fondly cherish the pardonable delusion that a play of this character can be made popular. It was performed to a thin house, with the several parts WELL sustained, but was received without emotion.”²²

Another novelty, but of a very different sort, was *The Drunkard* or *15 Years of Progressive Vice*. This, despite the similarity of the name, was not the famous play by W. H. Smith which had its *première* in Boston six years later, but another work of the same ilk, more generally known as *Fifteen Years of a Drunkard's Life*, which, according to Dr. Odell, was introduced to New York audiences in 1841.²³ This nineteenth-century morality was performed at the St. Louis Theatre October 17 and again, three nights later, when, together with *Is He Jealous?*, which featured a Miss Hamblin who later murdered her supposed husband in Mobile, and *Victoria*, it brought the season to a close. In the local cast J. M. Field was the Vernon; his brother, the Copsewood; Lewis, the Dogrose; and Mrs. Lewis, the Alicia.

The summer and fall of this year saw but two Shakespearean productions, *The Merchant of Venice* on August 30 and *Much Ado* on October 5. In the former, J. M. Field appeared as Shylock, Ludlow as Gratiano, Mat Field as Bassanio, Anderson as Antonio, Brunton as Lorenzo, Mrs. Lewis as Portia, and Miss Petrie as Nerissa. The “joyous comedy” served as a vehicle for Mrs. Stuart, who played a return engagement in October, her Benedick being J. M. Field; Claudio, Mat Field; and Hero, Miss Petrie.

²² *Daily Evening Gazette*, September 12, 1838.

²³ Odell, *op. cit.*, IV, 489.

According to the advertisement in the *Daily Argus* of September 21, Rice's benefit was notable for a certain novelty, a novelty which, in the light of the city's future history, was significant. This was a monologue in the German language by a certain "Mynheer Von Ick, from the German theatres." There had been, it will be recalled, recitations in French, notably by Aristippe, but this was, so far as I know, the first use of German in a public entertainment in St. Louis. As to the identity of the speaker, there is some doubt, but I think it more than likely that he was a certain Icks, whose appearance in German plays in New York Dr. Odell mentions in his account of the fall season of 1837, exactly a year previous.²⁴

The last part of the season was given over to a regular avalanche of revivals, the list of the pieces performed suggesting a tabloid history of the St. Louis stage from the triumphs of Mrs. Turner in 1818 down to the unhappy winter of 1838. I shall not pause to do more than give their names and in one or two cases say who played the chief rôles. Here they are: *La Tour de Nesle*, *The Warlock of the Glen*, *The Brigand*, *Clari*, *The French Spy*, *The Partisan*, *Cinderella* (with Schoolcraft as the Prince and Eliza Petrie back in the rôle she had sung the year before), *The Falls of Clyde*, *Zem-buca*, *Bertram* (with Anderson in the title rôle), *The Lady of Lyons* (Mrs. Stuart as Pauline), *The Youthful Queen* (Mrs. Stuart), *The Swiss Cottage*, *Hunting a Turtle*, *The Foundling of the Forest*, *The Hunter of the Alps*, *The Children in the Wood*, *The Forty Thieves*, *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*, *She Stoops To Conquer* (Ludlow as Marlow and Miss Petrie as Miss Hardcastle), *Of Age Tomorrow*, and *Town and Country*.²⁵ Did the managers forget any? Not many, it seems.

On Saturday, October 20, the editor of the *Republican* in bidding the departing players farewell and Godspeed, re-

²⁴ According to Alfred Henry Nolle (*German Drama on the St. Louis Stage*, p. 9 n.) Icks came from the Königsstädter-Theatre in Berlin. Nolle also asserts that his visit to St. Louis had "no immediate consequences in introducing German drama permanently on the St. Louis Stage."

²⁵ *Mo. Rep.*, August, September, and October, 1838.

vealed that the season was being brought to a close a week sooner than had been planned because of the failure of Junius Brutus Booth to keep his engagement with the managers. This was, I believe, the first time St. Louis theatre-lovers encountered the eccentricities of the tragedian; it was not the last. The two seasons of 1838 were now ended, and little had Ludlow and Smith to show for their trials and their pains. The editorial referred to above concedes that the performances had not been well attended, probably because of the hard times following the panic of 1837. Ludlow in his review of the events of the summer states that Lewellen and his horse drew full houses, and that some of the benefits were well attended; of the rest he says nothing.²⁶ Smith simply dismisses the season as "barely paying."²⁷ But in his letters to his partner he said more, much more. Although most of his ire was directed against those whom Joe Field termed "the Mobilians," it found other targets as well. Overburdened with debts, with notes confronting him on every side, his actors demanding more pay, his stars appropriating most of his profits, and the public receiving with indifference his finest efforts, he gave way to pessimism. Like Caldwell, the New Orleans potentate, he felt that his lines had fallen among ingrates and knaves, that the honorable dealings of Ludlow and Smith were being thrown away on an unworthy profession. "The truth is," he wrote his partner, "we are too good for it." But, if matters were bad, they were destined to become worse. For no sooner had they opened their winter season in Mobile in a handsomely redecorated theatre than "after the performance of the MILLER AND HIS MEN, the St. Emanuel was burned to the ground, together with all the scenery, properties, wardrobe, library, and every thing therein."²⁸ But it took more than such a disaster, the first of several they were to experience, to down them. Ten days later, they opened another theatre, and in the spring of 1839 were ready to resume their assault upon St. Louis.

²⁶ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 507.

²⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

CHAPTER XIII

A TREE, A FORREST, AND A GALAXY, 1839

THE close of the fourth decade of the century found on the western bank of the Mississippi a thriving young American metropolis, pushing its limits up over the rolling hills and out into the prairie, and feverishly building new and sometimes "elegant" structures to accommodate the swelling business and the crowds of newcomers who poured in monthly, not only from the Eastern and Southern states, but from the revolution-torn countries of Central Europe as well. Of the good-natured, easy-going French who had moved so placidly among their traditions and their whitewashed cottages under the fruit-trees, few traces remained beyond the narrow streets and the occasional descendant of the old families who was able to keep pace with the shrewd and restless Yankees. These Gallic pioneers who had explored and opened up the wilderness were disappearing, pushed into the background, not only by the Americans, but also by the crowds of German emigrants who were so soon to obliterate most of the evidences of the Latin civilization and give St. Louis the Teutonic complexion for which it has ever since been known. According to the census, taken in April, the population of the city numbered 16,207, which marked a decided growth during the past few years, even if it did fall short, as official counts often do today, of an estimated 20,000. The *Daily Evening Gazette* of April 23 published the following interesting analysis of the figures, which reveals the composition of the population: free white males, 8,507; free white females, 4,565; total white, 13,072; free colored males, 219; free colored females, 209; male slaves, 705; female slaves, 880; total colored, 2,013; on steamboats—white males, 843; colored males, 225; and colored females, 54.

“Between 21 and 45,” the paper adds, “there are 6,157 white males; and only 1,901 females; —three gentlemen to one lady.” These figures are of importance as making possible some computation of the number of potential theatregoers in St. Louis. It will be seen that the total white population between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five was but a little over 8,000. Of these, 1,901 were women of whom certainly not more than a fourth, or 475, would be playgoers. Of the men, of corresponding ages, it might be safe to include a third, or, roughly, 2,050. The total would then be 2,525. Of the 4,015 whites not “between 21 and 45” not more than 1,000 are likely to have patronized Ludlow and Smith with any frequency. This would make the total number of resident theatre-lovers about 3,500. In my calculations, I have included the white men on the steamboats in the 6,157. Whether I have been right in so doing, I do not know, as I cannot tell exactly who were meant by the designation, though I presume they were the officers and crews of vessels registered out of St. Louis. My reason for including them is the fact that Smith had, in writing Ludlow, the year before declared that attendance at the theatre was governed by the coming and going of the steamboats. Of course he was referring chiefly to the transient population, which was at this time comparatively large, though I very much doubt if a great many of these travelers were in a position to spend many dollars on theatrical entertainment. To the number so far computed should be added also a few of the four hundred odd free negroes, since some of them did occupy the places set aside for their use in the top gallery. I do not believe, therefore, that 3,500 can be far from the number of residents of the city upon whose occasional patronage the managers could count; at all events I am confident that the estimate is not too small. As Ludlow gives the capacity of the theatre as 1,500, it is obvious that the margin is not very large, unless the same persons were to attend the performances regularly. This they assuredly would not do, especially the women.

Theatrically, 1839 was a year of great importance to St. Louis and, had St. Louis alone been involved, would have been, I think, a prosperous one for Ludlow and Smith. In their books it is marked down as a black year, and when the season closed, the partners were writing each other in a most despondent tone. But the seat of their troubles was Mobile, where fire and pestilence played havoc, not alone with their business, but with their possessions as well. If in the late fall and early winter business fell off in St. Louis, much of the trouble can be ascribed to bad weather and also to the fact that the local season had been running continuously since early in April, except for one month in the heat of the summer. This was by far the longest season the city had known; in fact, it was much longer than the managers had intended. But, their establishment in the South having gone up in flames, they had no recourse but to keep their company at work in the North, zero weather to the contrary notwithstanding, until a new house could be found and made ready. This was, moreover, the partners' second disaster within a year, their regular Mobile Theatre having been burned to the ground shortly after the opening of their season in November, 1838.

Early in March, 1839, Smith set out from Mobile to start a spring season in the St. Louis Theatre. The recollection of the calamitous experiences of the previous year no doubt persuaded the managers to postpone their opening until April. Ludlow states that the mission was intrusted to Smith because his family was in St. Louis; he himself remained with his *lares* and *penates* in Mobile "to set on foot and endeavor to obtain subscriptions for the erection of a new theatre in that city."¹ Stopping over a few days in New Orleans to buy some badly needed lamps on credit—he had not the cash—"Old Sol" picked up a rumor that Caldwell, with whom they were no longer on friendly terms, was planning to erect a cheap theatre in St. Louis, but he declined to be alarmed and pro-

¹ Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, p. 511.

ceeded hopefully up the river, going ashore briefly at Natchez and Vicksburg in quest of recruits.² In Vicksburg Smith found Ellen Tree filling an engagement, and felt compelled to hold her to the letter of her contract, since she was anxious to return to the East and also said that "150 was too much to share after." But he was firm and the popular star consented to fill her engagement.³

From March 28 to April 6, the St. Louis Theatre was rented out to a magician known as "Signor Blitz," and then on the eighth Ludlow and Smith opened their spring season with two old stand-bys, *The Honey Moon* and *No Song, No Supper*. The company finally collected by Smith included not a few new members. In the absence of stars, the leading business fell chiefly to a Mrs. McLean and to one Thomas F. Lennox. Nominally, for the gratification of her vanity, the lady was engaged as a star, but she soon ceased to be featured in the advertisements and took her place as a regular member of the *corps dramatique*. "I have engaged Mrs. *McLean* as a Star for 6 weeks," Smith wrote his partner on the day of the opening, "\$30 per week & a fourth of one Benefit & third of another—She is to play leading business, & not to refuse any part, provided it is *first* in the piece—also to play *Widow Green*." This lady was, I presume, the same Mrs. McLean, or McClean, formerly Miss Fairfield, who had made some not highly successful appearances at the Park Theatre a few seasons before; at least, I have not been able to find reference to another person of that name on the contemporary stage. A few days after the opening, Smith observed that she had been

devilish queer in the text—but the people like her very much.—She is mighty raw—has been playing in country theatres, where they knew nothing, & cared nothing about exits & entrances. In the "Lady & Devil" she flitted about in any direction—entered sometimes R.H.U.E. [right hand upper entrance]—sometimes

² Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, March 13-15, 1839, Smith Collection.

³ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, March 19, 1839, *ibid.*

R.H.D. [right hand down]—then L.H.D. [left hand down]—every place but the right one—when spoken to about it—“that is the way *she* had been in the habit of doing it!” But . . . she is “simple, & willing to learn.”⁴

Evidently the lady had not greatly improved since her metropolitan failures, but, so long as she was well liked, it was not for her manager to worry.

Apropos of the new leading man, Smith said in the same letter (which it took him five days to complete):

The company has made a decidedly favorable impression—for indeed it ought—for it is talented and *expensive!* To help the matter, Lennox arrived last night!—In my distress for actors, I offered him his terms (\$30) for two months, and tho’ he is a little past his time, I do not feel justified in refusing him, as I know he has incommoded himself to come, as well as refused great terms offered him by Mrs. Drake to stay with her, [in Louisville], *as she has nobody.*—Besides, I have little doubt this man will prove fully capable to fill Joe Field’s place—and more than fill it.

Resuming his letter the next day, he was even better satisfied. “Lennox is about 13 times better than Joe Field in the part [Othello], judging from the first act—has an excellent voice, and gesticulates well.” Hezekiah L. Bateman, a young man of twenty-two, also joined the company at this time, and Smith reported him as “pretty good.” The new “heavy man,” one Marsh, was “respectable.” James Duff, son of a celebrated mother, was pronounced “the best walking gent. we have ever had—Burns clever—Harby (a new beginner) decidedly ditto, & neat as wax—McConechy an old, *steady*, sterling stock actor, (tho’ a young man)—without any particularly shining qualities about him.”

In addition to these, there were Eliza Petrie and Mat Field, C. L. Green, J. F. Schinotti, Mr. and Mrs. Henry, Davis, Jones, Lathrop, Mrs. Foster, and a Mrs. Madden. To furnish the necessary music, there was an orchestra of eight pieces under E. Wolf. On the whole, Smith was well pleased with his forces and he soon had the satisfaction of finding that

⁴ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 10-14, 1839, *ibid.*

the public agreed with him. Yet, he found too that "nothing less than the *big stars* will draw them—especially *wet nights*. Ellen Tree—Ellen Tree—is all the cry now—& Forrest, Booth & Celeste—they would like to see them *all together!*"

As I said above, the season opened April 8 with *The Honey Moon* and *No Song, No Supper*, Mrs. McLean ("from the Park Theatre," such was the potency of that name!) being starred as Juliana in the former to the Duke Aranza of Marsh, the Jacques of Smith, and the Volante of Eliza Petrie, lesser rôles being in the hands of Mrs. Henry, Field, and Duff. In the afterpiece young Bateman made his local début as Robin and Miss Petrie contributed her usual song.

The next night came the first star of the season, albeit not a very bright one. This was William C. Forbes, an associate of Ludlow's in his Kentucky days, who had since played some engagements in New York. Describing him as he had known him in 1832, the latter says:

Mr. Forbes was a young man about twenty-four years of age, of medium stature, with light hair and blue eyes, a pleasant expression of face, but not capable of great variety. His enunciation was smooth, but not forcible. He evidently had formed himself on the style of Mr. Thomas A. Cooper, then the greatest tragedian of America, but had not Mr. Cooper's genius, power, or dignity of manner.⁵

Whether or not seven years of experience had increased his artistic stature, Forbes did not attract the St. Louisans out into the wet weather which prevailed during his brief stay. For his opening he chose *Hamlet*. He was supported on the occasion by the following cast: Ghost, M. Field; Gravedigger, Sol Smith; Laertes, Bateman; Polonius, Green; Queen, Mrs. McLean; Ophelia, Miss Petrie. After the tragedy, Mrs. McLean gave further evidence of her versatility in *The Actress of All Work*.⁶

Wednesday, the bill was made up of "the Tragic Play of DAMON AND PYTHIAS" and "the afterpiece (first time) of the

⁵ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 398.

⁶ *Daily Mo. Rep.*, April 9, 1839.

ORIGINAL," Mr. Schinotti obliging with a song, "The Nightingale Club," between the two. In the tragedy, the friends were enacted by the star and Mat Field, Mrs. McLean being the Hermione and Miss Petrie the Calanthe. It is rather surprising to see "Old Sol's" name in the cast of such a portentous classic and as Dionysius, the tyrant. But he was down for the rôle and I presume played it, benignly I have no doubt; yet he made no reference to it in writing Ludlow next day, and, unless the opening dialogue was cut, he must have accomplished a quick change, since he evidently officiated in the box office before the play began. "Last night," he wrote, "it rained till dark, and ruined the house—\$139—& I took a \$20 Indiana bill altered from a \$5—which reduces it still lower." In the farce the principal performers were Green, Bateman, McConechy, and Mrs. Henry.

The next evening the début of Lennox, who played Othello to Forbes' Iago, a part he had recently played in New York to no less a Moor than Forrest, drew but \$159. Smith's appraisal of the new tragedian's powers, I have already quoted. With Mat Field as Cassio, Bateman as Roderigo, and Mrs. McLean as Desdemona, if she could keep her sense of direction, the performance was probably comparatively good. At least the critic of the *Gazette* pronounced the endeavors of Lennox and Forbes "quite successful." Friday the "operatic spectacle of *Rob Roy* was revived to allow the latter to display his skill as a romantic actor, and, more particularly, to give Lennox a chance to exhibit himself in one of his Scotch characters, Bailie Nicol Jarvie. Helen McGregor fell to Mrs. McLean, who also appeared, with Smith and Field, in *The Lady and the Devil*. In spite of "bad, threatening weather all day & evening," the receipts crept up to \$263.50. Closing his five-day letter on Sunday morning, Smith reported that Forbes' benefit, *The Stranger* and *Nick of the Woods* the night before, had brought in \$374.50—"of which we get \$300—His first night was \$368—so that his share of the 5 nights is \$108.50." Forbes' terms were, it will be seen, not exorbitant.

Who played Mrs. Haller to Forbes' Stranger, the papers do not reveal, though they place Bateman as Francis, Marsh as Steinfort, and Smith as Peter. Mrs. McLean was Telie Doe in *Nick of the Woods* or *The Salt River Roarer*, "a new drama . . . by G. W. Hardy, Esq. of New Orleans." Forbes took part in the second piece, as Ralph Stackpole. Lennox played Nathan Slaughter—his name was featured with Mrs. McLean's in the *Republican* of April 13—Green, Parson Dodge; and Miss Petrie, Edith Forrester. With this bill, Forbes called it a season, almost the only star not to be re-engaged that year.

The brief period intervening between the departure of Forbes and the coming of Miss Tree was given over chiefly to stock pieces—*Town and Country*, *Rob Roy*, *Charles II*, *The Warlock of the Glen*, *Guy Mannering*, with their attendant farces. In these the various members of the company followed their usual lines, and Smith himself played Kit Cosey and Captain Copp.

A new piece offered for the first time this season was "the new Scotch melo-drama" of *Cramond Brig* which featured Lennox as Captain Howison, Marsh as King James, and Miss Petrie as Marion, "with a song." This little piece evidently "took on," since it was given four times within a month. On its first night, April 18, it was sandwiched in between two pieces designed to display the rather doubtful virtuosity of Mrs. McLean, *The Actress of All Work*, in which she played seven different characters, and *A Day in Paris*, in which five was the more modest number. The next day "Thespis" grieved in the *Gazette* that her efforts had not drawn a better house, and reported that "though not so happy in some of her parts," she was "admirable in others." April 19, the *pièce de résistance* was one Mr. Nellis, "a man without arms," who "kindly volunteered" for Lennox' benefit to "go through his astonishing feats," truly astonishing inasmuch as he was to "use his fingers very dexterously." "Why," queried Thespis, "don't 'Old Sol' hire the Giraffe for 'one night only?'"

The following evening saw "the first performance on any stage" of a new original farce, *Here She Goes, There She Goes!* The authorship of this inconsequential piece is unknown. Some acrimonious correspondence in the *Gazette* and the *Republican* concerning the acting reveals that the dramatist's initials were J. F. Perhaps it was Joe Field, but I have found no other evidence of his presence in the city at the time. At all events the play appears to have met with slight favor.

On April 22, came the first of the season's major stars, Ellen Tree, for seven nights and a benefit. She went through her usual rôles to the immense satisfaction of the public, the press, and the manager. She opened triumphantly in *The Hunchback*, which was followed on consecutive evenings by *Ion*, *The Lady of Lyons*, *The Love Chase* and *Perfection*, *As You Like It*, *The Ransom* and *The Youthful Queen*, *The Wife*, and for her farewell benefit, *The Belle's Stratagem* and *Perfection*. Her success was, if possible, greater than before. The amateur critics vied with each other in acclaiming her and the editors contributed brief but laudatory paragraphs. "Of the beauty, tenderness, sublimity and varied excellence of her personations," wrote "Thespis" in the *Gazette* (April 23), "it is superfluous to say a single word, in addition to the mass of panegyric which has been bestowed upon her. "Jacob Faithful" who "communicated" his views to the *Republican* (April 27) did, however, dare to temper his encomium with a few suggestions. "Would it be heresy," he asked, "to intimate that there are *some* little faults which tarnish her acting? Is she *perfection*? I think not. Is there not a rapidity of enunciation in some of her impassioned scenes which might be corrected—particularly in the opening scenes of the *Hunchback*?"

There may at times have been flaws in her elocution, but the public heeded them not. Jacob Faithful opened his critique with the statement that "crowded houses continue to reward the managers of this establishment for their efforts to please. Nightly, this week, has the house been literally

crammed from top to bottom." On May 1 the *Republican* reported:

Never has there been such a crowd assembled in our theatre as graced Miss *Tree's* benefit last night. From pit to gallery it was a perfect jam, a living mass. We are told that a few minutes after ten in the morning every box in the Theatre was taken, and as high as five dollars premium was offered and refused, for boxes. Hundreds were disappointed in getting seats.

Even "Old Sol" was delighted. He pronounced the receipts "immense." In view of the fact that the house, at least nominally, held \$1,200, his enthusiasm may, in the light of the actual records, seem a bit surprising and it may be necessary to take the editorial superlatives with some of the traditional grains of salt. Yet even before Mr. Einstein it had been discovered that, in the theatre at least, everything was relative. Smith nowhere gives the receipts for Monday, April 29, when the star played *The Wife* and he himself appeared in *The Critic*. Of the other pieces, except, of course, those on the benefit bill, I find it rather surprising that the pseudo-classical *Ion* should have proved the most popular. Smith recorded in his letter of April 27 that it brought in \$758.50. Less unexpected is the appeal of *The Lady of Lyons* which came second with \$682.50, followed by *The Love Chase* and *Perfection* with \$663. "Shakespeare," say the producers, "spells ruin"—*As You Like It* drew the least, \$421. As for the benefit, that marked down on the firm's books \$1,052. "All this," wrote Smith the next day, "in the Boxes & Parquette, except 132 in the gallery." In a postscript added next day he gave Miss *Tree's* average per night as \$265.50, the firm's as \$390.50. "What an inequality!—and thankful for that!"

The correspondents of both the *Republican* and the *Gazette* noted that the stock company gave the star unusually good support. Said "Thespis" in the article quoted above:

Many of those impressions unfavorable to the present company, which seem to have found a place in some minds, must certainly

have yielded to the evidence of talent and power exhibited last evening. Miss Petrie, Lennox, Marsh, Field, and Bateman, all acquitted themselves with a fidelity and spirit, which commanded the hearty applause of the audience; and must go far to satisfy the public that the manager's efforts have been honestly and successfully directed to securing a competent stock company.

Most of the male leads fell, of course, to Lennox, though he surrendered Doricourt in *The Belle's Stratagem* to Field and contented himself with Flutter. Thespis found his Claude distinctly inferior to that of Joe Field. To Mat Field fell such parts as Beuseant in *The Lady of Lyons*, Waller in *The Love Chase*, and, surprisingly enough, "the melancholy Jacques." Mrs. McLean essayed the Widow Green in *The Love Chase* and Clemanthe in *Ion*.

Conflicting accounts of the department of Miss Tree's audiences appear in communications to the daily papers. On April 25, the *Gazette* published the following paragraphs:

A correspondent complains that the performances at the Theatre commence too early; and that much of the first act is lost in the confusion ensuing upon the filling up of the house.

He also wishes to know, if some of the admirers of Miss TREE cannot testify their approval of her acting by demonstrations, a little more refined than such yells and whoops as enliven the wigwams of the Pawnees and Pottawatamies.—*Chacun à son goût*.

To which Jacob Faithful replied in the *Republican* two days later: ". . . the order and decorum observed throughout by the audience, are sure guarantees that the people of St. Louis appreciate merit and lack not the disposition to evince the fact." As to the question of the hour of beginning, I have found nothing to indicate what it was precisely at this date. The advertisement in the *Republican* of August 15 next gave the time of curtain-rising as "a quarter before 8 o'clock." A month later the hour was advanced to seven-thirty, on October 3 to seven-fifteen, and on November 13 to seven precisely. So, at least, state the advertisements. I should guess that in April it was a quarter past seven, but that is simply a guess.

It would seem that Miss Tree's St. Louis engagements were



MRS. NOAH M. LUDLOW (IN LATER LIFE)

(From an ambertype in the possession of Miss Cornelia Maury)

doomed to be marred by mishaps. The year before, Lyne's inebriety had caused no little embarrassment. This season's *contretemps* was, happily, more amusing than serious, yet it cannot have failed to be disconcerting. It certainly was significant as revealing not only the thoroughness with which stock pieces were prepared but also the familiarity of some of the actors at least—in this case the son of two celebrated stars—with the plays which they helped interpret. I shall let "Old Sol" describe it, taking his account from his letter to Ludlow dated April 27 rather than the one in his *Theatrical Management*.

In general our business is conducted here with great regularity. I don't leave the stage, at rehearsal, unless called away by some imperious necessity. Last night we played "As you like it—Duff, who was Duke Frederick, was sick in the morning, & excused from rehearsal. I was called away from the book (last night), to settle a row at the Box Office, & when I returned I found the curtain down—& the people at the music room door all asked me as I passed what was the matter? Where was the Duke? &c—I soon enquired into the matter, & found the Duke had doffed his robes, believing he had finished his part! Miss Tree & Mrs. Henry had gone as far as they could—the Duke did not appear, & they left the stage,—when the prompter rang down the curtain. Miss Tree proposed the Duke should go on & banish her yet, & he had by this time dressed again, & was studying the scene—all this was done in a moment—but it struck me that it would be making matters worse to have a few lines spoken (or *read*,) & then to have the curtain fall again—for she must have time to dress. Miss Tree insisted that she must be banished—So I settled the matter thus: "You say very truly, Rosalind must be banished—here, wait a moment—prompter, ring the bell—I'll banish you." Ring—ring—ding—"Ladies & gentlemen—very sorry &c. &c—Duke—so & so—sick this morning—misunderstanding—please consider Rosalind *banished* from the court & the play will then proceed." This was received with shouts & the audience were restored to good humor at once. I thought Miss Tree would have burst her corsetts.

The success of this engagement brought the two managers much-needed financial relief. Smith was even able to send

Ludlow \$1,000 to help out the situation in Mobile. Yet at that they could not yet put worry behind them. "Our expenses *now*," Smith told his partner, ". . . without giving *me* anything to eat—& calculating rent at \$250 a week—are a trifle over \$900 a week."⁷ And, unfortunately, the next star did not brighten up the prospect.

This was Charles Kemble Mason who, it will be remembered, had been a somewhat mature-looking, blue-bearded Romeo to the Juliet of Mrs. Hamblin in the old salt house four years before. His brief engagement began inauspiciously and ended in disaster. On May 1 he opened as Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way To Pay Old Debts* with Lennox as Wellborn, Field as Marrall, Green as Justice Greedy, Mrs. McLean as Margaret, and Mrs. Henry as Lady Allworth, to the sum of \$119.50. "I tell you," thundered Sol in the postscript, "the people don't care a d——n for anything less than *Tree, Forrest, & Celeste!*"⁸ Thursday the tragedy was *Richard III* with Lennox playing Richmond; Field, Buckingham; Marsh, King Henry; and Mrs. McLean, the Queen.

The next bill was composed of *The Mountaineers*, Mason playing Octavian to the Sadi of Lennox, the Balcazin Muley of Marsh, the Kilmallock of Field, the Floranthe of Mrs. McLean, and the Agnes of Miss Petrie; and *The Rent Day* in which he played Martin Heywood supported by Mrs. McLean, Mrs. Carr, Field, and Bateman. It must have been a strange performance. To begin with, there was but \$112 in the house, and, as subsequent events proved, the star was doubtless anything but pleased. Furthermore, as Smith expressed it the next evening when he indited his daily journal to Ludlow, Green "was so swipesy, he mixed his words up in the most original manner." The effect of what Sol termed his

⁷ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 27, 1839, Smith Collection.

⁸ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 28–May 2, 1839, *ibid.*

“defalcation” was pictured by one “Jacques” in a letter to the *Gazette* the next day. The play, he said,

went off horribly. For some reason the audience and the majority of the actors got tickled and began playing off upon each other the most comic interludes imaginable. Finally, the audience outlaughed the actors; and the latter retired. It was a rich scene, doubtless worth all the money paid for entrance; but then it was not set down in the bills.

I wonder how the proper Mr. Mason felt about the affair. As to his feelings the following night, he left no one in doubt.

The occasion was to be his benefit, and he and “Old Sol” had compounded a pretentious bill of big scenes from the star’s best pieces. According to the advertisement in the *Republican* (May 4), he was to give acts from *Macbeth*, *The Wife*, and *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*, and conclude with the one-act comedy *Napoleon*. According to Smith, there was also to be included an act from *Hamlet*. But the star proceeded to “cut a caper,” as Smith put it.

He began with *Macbeth*, and went thro’ with *that*, to about 10 people—“in the lower end of the hall”—& then begged me to dismiss the house. Of course I refused, & insisted on the performance going on. Finding me positive, he said *he would not perform any more*, and if I wouldn’t dismiss, he would go on and tell them he should decline going any further. This he did—made a beautiful but *cutting* speech to the very *select* party of friends (?)—& concluded by bidding the public of St. Louis farewell forever. I followed him instantly—& decidedly disclaimed any part in the decision which Mr. M. had made, & stated that our rule was *never to postpone*—that *one* person was as much entitled to the performance as one hundred or one thousand—and that Mr. M’s. conduct would forever shut the doors of this establishment against him. At the same time I gave him credit for great talents & high & honorable feelings as a man, & told the people that personally I sympathised with him in the mortification he felt at the want of encouragement extended to him during his engagement—but as manager I had but one course to pursue. Mr. Mason having withdrawn, we must substitute other performers, & other entertainments in place of those

announced—& those auditors who did not wish to remain, could receive their money, &c—By this time there were 50 or 60 in the house, & they were coming in fast. About \$15 were returned at the Box Office—& we substituted Lennox for Mason in the Wife—Marsh in Hamlet—& “Cramond Brig” (a great favorite) for *Napoleon*.—So we got through swimmingly—& the receipts were \$167—!! Of course Mason will make no claim on the treasury—So the affair adds to our funds over \$80—he being entitled to half the house.—The truth is, I do not blame Mason in my heart—but as a matter of business, his course was decidedly wrong. He said that if it had been a stock night, he would have played if there had not been one person in the house—but on his benefit night, he conceived he had a right to abandon it if he chose.⁹

O tempora, o mores! How many a producer today would give a performance for ten people—or even consider it? If one should be found of Smith’s opinion that one man was as much entitled to his money’s worth as a thousand, what would the stars say? Yet Mason’s action was condemned by both the papers to whose files I have had access. Said the *Gazette*:

Mr. Mason has done himself a great wrong. To say nothing of the injustice which could prompt him to vent his spleen on those who attended his benefit, and did every thing they could to keep him in countenance, his act—unexplained as it is upon any grounds favorable to him—will go far to prejudice his fortunes both with managers and the public here and abroad.¹⁰

The incident inevitably calls to mind the similar action of Edmund Kean in Boston seventeen years before, one which naturally had much greater reverberations, and of which Mason cannot have been ignorant. He probably just let his injured pride get the better of him. Smith later (May 6) reported to Ludlow that he thought he was “sorry enough for his conduct.”

The Mason debacle was followed by what was anticipated by the sorely beset managers as the season’s sensation, to use

⁹ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 3-5, 1839, *ibid.*

¹⁰ *Daily Eve. Gaz.*, May 6, 1839.

a twentieth-century phrase, the St. Louis début of the most famous star on the American stage of that day, the greatest histrionic genius as yet produced by the new republic, "the fabulous Forrest" as he has been called by a recent biographer.¹¹ Edwin Forrest was at this time but thirty-three years of age; he had, however, been on the stage for nearly twenty years and had attained the topmost pinnacles of his success. At the height of his powers, he was enjoying a professional popularity without parallel in this country, and the reputation of being, not only the greatest of American actors, but also the patron-saint of American dramatists. To this engagement the managers looked forward as they had to that of Ellen Tree, and from it they expected relief from their many financial difficulties. But the sailing was not to be so clear as they hoped.

Mr. and Mrs. Forrest reached St. Louis May 5 on the "Louisville," and he opened the next evening, Monday, in *Virginius*. Unfortunately, however, he had been preceded three days by a rival attraction, the celebrated singer Caradori Allan, who on Saturday had embarked upon a series of "music soirées" at the Missouri Hotel. Her arrival at this critical juncture was regarded by Smith with dismay. He foresaw too well that she would make inroads upon the audiences of the great tragedian. So he attempted strategy, using his best endeavors to induce her to give her second concert on Sunday evening¹² or to give matinées in the Theatre, but "no go."¹³ The lady insisted on carolling the very nights when Forrest was to play, and the results brought "Old Sol" to the verge of distraction. As I said, the tragedian began his engagement Monday in *Virginius*, which was followed on the ensuing evenings by *Othello*, *The Lady of Lyons*, and *Hamlet*. On two of these nights Caradori sang, and to hear her warble "Di piacer," "Angels Ever Bright and Fair," and "Jock o'

¹¹ Mr. Montrose J. Moses.

¹² Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 2, 1839, Smith Collection.

¹³ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 3, 1839, *ibid.*

Hazeldean," the élite of St. Louis crowded the parlors of the hotel and forgot all about the giant tragedian a few blocks away. His début in *Virginius*, which was to have filled the pit and the boxes, to say nothing of the managerial coffers, attracted but \$506 to the house! Meanwhile "Car^a Allan's concert crammed—they say \$400—but probably over \$200—the room (at the National) won't hold much over that—but she certainly took away the *fashionables*. Our house is not to be sneezed at, certainly—but it does seem to me that on the 1st night in St. Louis of *Edwin Forrest* there ought to be \$1,000 in the house!"¹⁴ But worse was yet to come. The receipts for *Othello* were only \$473, and that on an evening when the singer was silent! Smith began to fear that the St. Louisans could not "stand the strain we are putting on them."¹⁵ Thursday morning found him reduced almost to despair:

Forrest's engagement is failing!—Last night (Claude Melnotte) the receipts were but \$268!! What do you think of that?—At the National Hotel, not only *the* room, but every nook and cranny leading to it, was jammed full! fifty *ladies* more than could be seated—sweating, fanning, & admiring—while Caradora was warbling Italian music, the words of which were Greek to them! I went in—no, not *in*—I submitted to be squeezed in an anti-room—for a few minutes—and it is my honest belief there were not less than 450 people in and *about* there—and all *theatrical going people*.¹⁶

For the moment he "most sincerely and heartily" wished that the Theatre were off their hands. However, having given vent to his exasperation, he, as he expressed it, "concluded on a master stroke to knock up Mad. Carry's *last* concert—for she has another 'last' one, by desire of several 'families of distinction.'" This master-stroke was to counter the diva's foreign arias with a real aboriginal American tragedy, John Augustus Stone's *Metamora*, the most popular of Forrest's

¹⁴ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 6, 1839, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 8, 1839, *ibid.*

¹⁶ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 9, 1839, *ibid.*

prize dramas and presumably the most potent drawing-card in his repertory. Smith had originally planned to hold it over for the "re-engagement," but Madame Allan forced his hand, and he presented it, together with *The Spectre Bridegroom*, on Friday evening. He wrote Ludlow that it should bring in over \$600. But he had builded better than he knew. "Metamora resulted in a house of \$951!—Come, not so bad, my master. 'Stocks is riz.'"¹⁷

This letter is the last of this series of Smith's reports preserved, but the Forrest engagement apparently proceeded in a manner much more in accordance with the anticipations of the managers. *Metamora* was followed by *King Lear*, and, after the first benefit, *Damon and Pythias*, the "re-engagement" was announced. This involved five tragedies, *The Gladiator* (twice), *Brutus*, *Pizarro*, and, for the farewell benefit, *Metamora* and *William Tell*. Precisely what the receipts were, it is impossible to tell, but the papers reported full houses. Of the first *Metamora* performance, the *Gazette* said, "The theatre was filled, last night, from floor to ceiling."¹⁸ This may perhaps be taken as an example of the accuracy of contemporary reporting. As pointed out above, the house was supposed to be capable of holding \$1,200, and that night actually contained but \$951. Possibly those present made enough noise to sound like a full house, or perhaps the editor was merely taking this way to help the proprietors. In this connection it is interesting to note that William B. Wood, for years one of the managers of the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, states in his memoirs that on only one night in forty-seven years did he ever see a full house, and that then he was terrified at the possibility of a panic.¹⁹ In describing the first benefit both the *Republican* and the *Gazette* used the word "jam," and the former paper (May 20) called the fare-

¹⁷ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, May 11, 1839, *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Daily Eve. Gaz.*, May 11, 1839.

¹⁹ William B. Wood, *Personal Recollections of the Stage*, p. 275.

well "another real jammed up affair." Smith in his *Theatrical Management* states that Forrest's proceeds from his twelve nights were \$2,157.²⁰ How much Ludlow and Smith derived, he fails to say and for want of all the figures I cannot calculate. On all nights except the benefits the star was to "share after \$100."²¹ All pleas that this figure be raised to at least \$150, the terms accepted by Ellen Tree, Celeste, and the Ravels, "the greatest attractions we have had," or a third of the receipts and a half benefit, those upon which J. B. Booth was engaged for Mobile²² were flatly rejected by the tragedian. Since the managers reckoned their nightly expenses at \$300 and, except with major attractions, divided only after that sum had been taken in, it can easily be seen what a risk they assumed, and what their losses must have amounted to on Forrest's first three nights. The Ludlow and Smith letter-book reveals the fact that, during the previous year, these two partners had initiated, or sought to initiate, a concerted movement upon the part of the western managers to induce Forrest to visit their part of the country, but had failed.²³ In his negotiations, the star had at first demanded half the receipts, but this demand was positively refused, partly on the ground that the partners had formally agreed from the first never to grant such terms, and now, doubtless, Forrest considered the \$100 basis a compromise, and it was on this basis that he made \$2,157. Probably, thanks to the prosperity of the second week, the firm came off reasonably well.

So much for the material side of the engagement. If its success may have been subject to qualification, the same was not true of the artistic. The actor's performances were enthusiastically acclaimed by the press. Into these eulogies

²⁰ Smith, *Theatrical Management*, p. 138.

²¹ Sol Smith to N. M. Ludlow, April 1, 1839, Smith Collection.

²² Ludlow and Smith to Edwin Forrest, September 29, 1838, *Ludlow & Smith Letter Book*, Smith Collection.

²³ Ludlow and Smith to Scott and Thorne (Cincinnati), July 23, 1838; to Edwin Forrest, July 23 and August 31, 1838, *ibid.*

it is scarcely necessary to go in detail, since they were in the strain to which Forrest was accustomed. It is, however, rather interesting, and encouraging too, to note that the critic of the *Gazette* was not impressed by *Metamora*, which he dismissed as "a poor, vapid play." The support given him by the stock company left some unsatisfied. The third morning of the engagement the *Republican* volunteered "a word to the managers. The Theatre is not well lighted up, and it is downright murder of good acting to make such casts as were made in *Virginius*. Miss Petrie, however deserving she may be, is no more fit for the character of Virginia than we are."²⁴ Moreover, the performance of *Metamora* was marred by one of the *contretemps* too familiar on the stage of the day. Smith reported it to Ludlow the following day.

As in Mobile, I did not leave the Book a moment—and doing the piece 5 or 6 days before I intended, it was to have been expected it would be rather *roughly* done—but what occurred was entirely unexpected by me. *Marsh*, one of our *dependables*, as I have always thought . . . was a perfect *dumby!*—He was on for Fitz Arnold, the heavy part that Rice played in Mobile—and tho' I am told by those *who stood near him* that he spoke every line of the part *not one word* could be heard as far as the orchestra—the consequence was, he was *hissed*. He went down to the footlights to make a speech—but all that could be heard was "Ladies and gen. . . ." And so he went thro' the part. When he was killed by *Metamora*, the house literally screamed with delight.

I wonder how Forrest enjoyed these diversions. Not content with them, Marsh played his rôle in the afterpiece in what amounted to dumb-show, and then, after the curtain fell, proceeded to insult Miss Petrie in such foul language that she fled weeping to "Old Sol's" dressing-room. By the latter he was promptly "turned out of doors," whereupon he threatened to challenge him to a duel. "Well," observed the proprietor, "we managers must expect to be annoyed a little sometimes—and we can afford it, if they give us such houses as last night." Nothing, however, came of Marsh's threat

²⁴ *Daily Mo. Rep.*, May 8, 1839.

and he was soon reinstated, but in the meantime Smith had to make some quick changes in his casts, and actually play the Duke of Albany in *King Lear* himself. Yet over these mis-
haps, the genius of Forrest triumphed. At the close of the last performance, as the *Gazette* (May 20) reported, "Mr. Forrest was called for from every part of the house, amid a din of applause that was perfectly deafening," and he finally appeared and "in a brief and neat speech, delivered in a weighty and impressive manner" thanked St. Louis for its welcome and for the courtesies extended him both professionally and socially. The next day he departed, with his well-lined pockets, on the "Czar."

Forrest was followed by Madame Celeste who promptly danced her way into the hearts of the St. Louisans as she had done into those of the more sophisticated Easterners half a decade before. Despite the fact that rain fell during a great part of her visit and, it was thought, cut down her houses somewhat, she nevertheless had a benefit, the tickets to which were disposed of by lottery, which broke all records, bringing in \$1,149.50,²⁵ according to the *Gazette* (May 28) "one hundred dollars more than the theatre has ever held before." This was her first benefit; the second also, on June 1, attracted a great audience. Like Forrest, Celeste performed twelve nights. Her first engagement began on May 20 with the bill she usually chose for her openings, *The French Spy* and the ballet from *La Bayadère*. This was repeated the next evening, with a farce added for good measure. Two evenings were then devoted to *The Wizard Skiff* and two to *The Wept of Wish-Ton Wish*. For her first benefit she selected *St. Mary's Eve* and *The Wizard Skiff* with no less than three dances in between. In the so-called "re-engagement" she redoubled her efforts, appearing on each occasion in at least two pieces, to say nothing of the usual dances. To those already offered, she added two performances of *The Child of the Wreck* and, for her final benefit, *The Star of the Forest*. In most of these

²⁵ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

plays, if so they may be termed, she appeared in two or three rôles, rôles in which she could display her remarkable gift for pantomime, which she stressed, her command of the English tongue being limited. After witnessing her performances in *The French Spy*, the critic of the *Republican* exclaimed:

She has the powers of animation which we did not believe belonged to the human body. In fact, she frequently appears as if closely allied to some celestial or fairy existence, for every motion, whirl, bend, posture and exhibition is coupled with a grace and ease that robs it of every grosser appearance. The most fastidious might look upon her exhibitions without a blush.

And yet the *Gazette*, a few days later (May 28) thought it advisable to observe that "a change in Celeste's dancing costume, so as to satisfy the most prudish tastes, and her exquisite acting, will draw full houses, now that she is re-engaged."

Stars came thick and fast in the spring of 1839, but as Smith had predicted to Ludlow, after Tree, Forrest, and Celeste, none of them proved attractive to the public, who perhaps had squandered their spare cash in the recent dramatic orgy. The peak of the season was passed, and it was the manager's object now to hold things together till July 4 when it was to come to a formal end. But before taking up the activities of these visitors, it is only fitting that I note the arrival of two additions to the permanent company, whose advent was actually of much greater importance. These were Mr. and Mrs. George P. Farren, a very talented couple whose names were long familiar to all lovers of the theatre in this country. George Farren was a comedian of Irish birth. His wife had as Mary Ann Russell played very youthful rôles in Caldwell's company in the salt house twelve years before. She now came back as successor to Eliza Riddle Field and, more immediately, to Mrs. McLean. Both the Farrens proved to be valuable recruits.

Now for the stars. So many were they that Smith passed over one who had formerly been a great favorite. In the last

days of the month both the *Republican* and the *Gazette* noted the presence in the city of Mrs. Pritchard,²⁶ but despite editorial hints the lady of many husbands was suffered to depart unseen. The first attraction presented after Celeste's departure was one Love, "the celebrated Dramatic *Polyphonist*," a young gentleman who had for some years been entertaining the patrons of metropolitan "museums" with ventriloquial exhibitions. The portrait of him in Dr. Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* pictures him as a rather sour-looking individual with a great deal of cravat and a very "off" eye, but he appears to have been a success in his specialty. According to the very impressive advertisement in the *Republican* (June 3), he was the

only Artiste in his line: who will introduce an entirely new and popular entertainment involving his eccentric ASSUMPTION OF CHARACTER; surpassing powers of IMITATION; singular alterations of countenance; &c. &c., concluding with an entertainment entitled LOVES LABOR LOST! In which Mr. LOVE will represent EIGHT DIFFERENT CHARACTERS!!!!!!!

This extraordinary display was followed by *The Farmer's Story*, Mrs. Farren making her début as Mary Lockwood, with her husband as Stephen and Mat Field as Bristles.

The next evening, June 4, Love was joined by Danforth Marble, the popular impersonator of Yankee characters, who played the famous rôle of Jonathan Ploughboy in *The Forest Rose* and proved himself according to the *Gazette* "A Yankee up to the hub" and, according to the *Republican* "perfectly killing." But he was not greeted, thought the writer in the latter sheet, by such an audience as he deserved. *The Forest Rose* was preceded by Mrs. Farren in *Perfection* and Love in some more of his stunts. Love remained through June 10 and Marble through June 11, the former presenting his tricks in various pieces of such names as *Love's Metamorphoses*, *Love in All Shapes*, *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*, and *Mine Host's Dilemma*. For his benefit, in which he was assisted by Mar-

²⁶ *Daily Mo. Rep.*, May 30, 1839; *Daily Eve. Gaz.*, May 29, 1839.

ble, he repeated *Love's Labor Lost*, which the critic of the *Republican* thought, in view of the number present, was very appropriately named. Dan Marble appeared in a number of his inimitable characterizations, Sam Patch, William in *Black-Eyed Susan*, Solomon Swap in *Jonathan in England*, Jacob Jewsharp in *The Yankee in Time*, Deuteronomy Dutiful in *The Vermonter*, and several in *The Bush Whacker*. In these pieces he was supported by the full strength of the company and was, so said the critics, as funny as man could be, but his efforts appear to have been largely in vain. The theatregoing public was exhausted, and exhausted it remained.

On his last night the comedian had the pleasure of facing a goodly house, but he must have known that it was not only to see him that the people had come. The occasion was Mat Field's benefit and his farewell to the stage. So popular was the young man professionally and in such high esteem was he held personally that a good-sized audience was assured. The causes of his retirement from a career in which he had made a really promising start were ill-health and an opportunity to join an expedition to Santa Fe which he hoped would prove beneficial. On the day of the benefit the editors of both the *Gazette* and the *Republican* took occasion to praise him warmly. Said the latter, in part:

Ever since the Theatre opened, Mr. F. has been a constant actor on our boards, always performing his part with promptitude, and though there may have been brighter stars, yet, never has there been one who has manifested a better spirit or more zeal and indefatigable industry. In whatever character he has been cast, (and he has been a doer of all) he has *always* acquitted himself well. We have never seen him at fault, or not prepared to do the utmost of his abilities, whatever he had to do.

To all this he has added what is yet better and more deserving of applause, the character and conduct of a gentleman. During his sojourn here he has won from all, and especially those who knew him most intimately, a character for sobriety, amiableness and rectitude, which has secured for his name a lasting monument in the recollection of his associates.

The bill of the evening was composed of *The Farmer's Story* and *The Yankee in Time*, and at the end young Field delivered his farewell address. It was the last time a St. Louis audience ever saw him, and, so far as I know, the last he ever appeared upon any stage. Returning from the western trip, he became an assistant editor of the *New Orleans Picayune*; his articles written under the pseudonym of "Phazma" attracted no little favorable notice. In 1841 he married Ludlow's daughter Cornelia, and, his health again failing, he made in 1843 a second trip to the Rocky Mountains in the party of Sir William Drummond Stuart, afterward reporting his experiences in a series of articles of real historical merit. In 1844 he founded, together with his brother J. M. Field and Charles Keemle, a weekly paper in St. Louis called the *Reveille*, and a few months later, while on a sea voyage, died at the age of thirty-one.

There now rose over the horizon a veritable constellation of stars, or as the papers described it a "galaxy." This was composed of Mr. and Mrs. George H. Barrett, John R. Scott, Young—erstwhile "Master"—Burke, and W. F. Johnson. Scott, the tragedian, and Burke we have met before. Johnson was an eccentric comedian, long after connected with Boston theatres. Barrett, a native of Ireland now in his middle forties, had been for some years a well-known and popular figure on the American stage. Although very tall, he was unusually graceful in his movements, and his polished manners had won him the soubriquet of "Gentleman George"; by not a few he was considered unrivaled in what was known as genteel comedy. His wife, about five years his junior, might seem a trifle mature to play Juliet to the Romeo of young Joseph Burke, now twenty-one, but she was famous for the remarkable preservation of her youthful beauty indeed to a much later date than this; so doubtless the discrepancy was not painfully apparent. Ordinarily, such a combination of talent would probably have filled the St. Louis Theatre for the thirteen nights of the engagement. But, as has been

noted, the pocket-books of the local playgoers had been mulcted by a procession of notables, and, furthermore, the heat of summer now descended upon the community, and made more alluring the outdoor attractions of the Vauxhall Gardens and of Miss Renou's Broadway Cottage where "dinner and evening parties [were] supplied with *Ice Cream, plain and ornamented Cakes and Pyramids* of every description," a "*fountain of Soda and Carbonated Mead*" slaked their thirst, and in the evening they were "saluted with a soft and gentle serenade." Despite the outcries of the critics who declared that never before had any pieces been so perfectly acted on these boards, the galaxy drew but few good houses.

The stars' repertory was undoubtedly attractive. They opened on June 12 with *The Lady of Lyons* and *The Irish Ambassador*. In the former, Scott played Claude; Mrs. Barrett, Pauline; and Barrett, Damas; in the latter Burke was, of course, Sir Patrick O'Plenipo; and Johnson, Count Moreno.²⁷ There followed *The School for Scandal* with Scott as Joseph, Barrett as Charles, Burke and Mrs. Barrett as the Teazles, and Johnson as Crabtree, and with Duff fairly bellying the witticisms of Sir Benjamin Backbite. The after-piece was *Tom Noddy's Secret*, which was repeated the next evening after *The Wife* with Scott and Mrs. Barrett in the leads. On Saturday, June 15, *Wives as They Were, and Maids as They Are* and *A Ghost in Spite of Himself* were offered for "Old Sol's" benefit. He was the subject of high encomium in the columns of the press, but whether or not the public proved responsive is not revealed.

The second week of the galaxy was opened with a strong bill, *The Belle's Stratagem* and *The Critic*. It was Barrett's benefit. Predicted the *Gazette*: "'Gentleman George' will make his best bow—assume his most graceful attitudes—lay his hand upon his heart with the most impressive air of gentlemanly indifference—exhibit the *nonchalance* of a man of

²⁷ The casts for the remainder of the season are taken from the advertisements and reviews in the *Daily Mo. Rep.* and the *Daily Eve. Gaz.*

the world—and present a lively image of the disciple of Chesterfield." All this as Doricourt in the comedy; in this piece Scott was the Touchwood; Johnson, the Mr. Hardy; Burke, the Flutter; and Mrs. Barrett, the Letitia. Barrett also played Puff in *The Critic* to the Sir Fretful Plagiary of Johnson and the Whiskerandos of Burke. On Tuesday, while Master Haskell was rivaling Blitz of recent memory at "the Museum," *The Lady of Lyons* was repeated with *The Omnibus* in which Mrs. Carr, one of the more humble members of the stock company, had her chance as Julia, her chief associates being Johnson and Burke. The last-named took his benefit the next night—*Romeo and Juliet* and *The Review*, the latter piece involving not only most of the visitors but Mrs. Farren and Miss Petrie as well. He also played a solo on the violin. Still the papers were protesting at Duff's roars; the critic in the *Gazette* complained (June 19), "The metallic ring of his voice stuns us yet."

The galaxy continued to bring forth more pieces, *John Bull* and *The Adopted Child*; *The Rivals* and *Tom Noddy's Secret* for Johnson's benefit on Friday, the comedian playing Tom Noddy and also Mrs. Malaprop! In the Sheridan comedy we have Barrett as Captain Absolute, Farren as Sir Anthony, Scott as Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Burke as Bob Acres, Mrs. Barrett as Lydia, and Mrs. Farren as Julia. I suspect that the performance was like the Bishop's egg, good in spots. This week ended with a repetition of *The School for Scandal* plus *The Irish Tutor*, and the next opened with *Walder the Avenger* and *Three Weeks after Marriage*. This was Scott's benefit, and he had, reported the *Republican* of June 26, "a large and fashionable house." Next night the stars appeared in a triple bill, *The Adopted Child*, *The Barrack Room*, and *The Omnibus*, and then after Mrs. Barrett's benefit, *The School for Scandal* and *The Rent Day*, they took their departure, I fear not in very gay spirits.

The summer season was now almost at an end. There is little to report except the fact that for his benefit Bateman

attempted Shylock to the Portia of Mrs. Farren; another farewell, and another fruitless starring engagement. The farewell, which took place July 1, was that of another old friend, Eliza Petrie. She had for some time been restless, and now withdrew as Smith wrote an applicant for her place, "from a supposition (a mistaken one) that she had 'outstayed her welcome.'"²⁸ Her plays were *The Hypocrite* and *The Ladder of Love*. In both pieces she was supported by Smith. Let us hope she had a good house, for, as the *Republican* said, she deserved it.

With the brief and unproductive visit of Mr. and Mrs. John Sloman the season came to a close. For a description of these personages, I shall turn to Ludlow. He says:

Mr. John Sloman was a London Jew, but now a convert from Judaism; his real name was said to be Solomon. . . . He was popular in the minor theatres of London as a comic singer between play and farce, yet at times he did some acting, such as *Sam Savoury*, in the farce of "Fish Out of Water"; but his comic songs, such as "Sweet Kitty Clover," "Major Longbow," and "Betsy Baker" were his attractive efforts. Mrs. Sloman was considered a good tragedy actress for her day, and in such characters as *Mrs. Haller*, in the "Stranger," *Mrs. Beverly*, in the "Gamester," and *Belvidera* in "Venice Preserved," I have seen no lady perform them better, that I can now remember.²⁹

In the light of these comments, it will be seen that their St. Louis repertory, if short, was well calculated to display their talents. Their first bill was composed of Southerne's *Isabella*, in which she had made her American debut in 1827,³⁰ and *Fish Out of Water*. Then came *Jane Shore* with Mrs. Farren as Alicia, Bateman as Gloster, Farren as Shore, and Marsh as Hastings, and *The Lottery Ticket*, Sloman playing Wormwood. The Glorious Fourth was distinguished by a lengthy bill, *The Ladder of Love* (Miss Petrie reappearing),

²⁸ Ludlow and Smith to Amelia Fisher, August 26, 1839, *Ludlow & Smith Letter Book*, Smith Collection.

²⁹ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

³⁰ F. C. Wemyss, *Theatrical Biography*, p. 119.

The Ransom, and "the new farce of HERCULES, KING OF CLUBS," and also by a transparency in front of the Theatre. The next evening Mrs. Sloman appeared as Mrs. Haller and her husband repeated Sam Savoury. The next night was Saturday, and with their benefit wrote finis after the season. The chief piece was *Fazio*, in which Mrs. Sloman appeared with Marsh and Farren. It was followed by *The Day after the Fair* with her husband in six different characters, and Mrs. Farren in four. It was furthermore promised that during the evening Mr. Sloman would sing no fewer than ten songs. The last song sung, the curtain fell, and the actors, at least those who stayed, settled down for a brief vacation. Whatever may have been its material results for Ludlow and Smith, the season was certainly one of the most interesting they ever presented.

As a sort of postscript to this chapter of professional productions, I shall mention two little pieces, one in Spanish, the other in French, presented by the students of St. Louis University at the tenth annual commencement on the morning of August 13. These were *The Inconveniences of Corruption* (the Spanish title is not given) and *Les Préparatifs pour la distribution des prix*.³¹ So far as I know, these two constituted the first real matinee performance, interpreting the term literally, ever given in St. Louis.

³¹ Scrapbook, Saint Louis University.

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE EVE OF THE FABULOUS FORTIES,

1839

THE fall of 1839 saw history repeat itself. The year before, Ludlow and Smith had devoted the spring and early summer to the exploitation of celebrated stars and the late summer and fall to the production of elaborate melodramatic spectacles. This fall they did the same thing, although they did have the assistance of one star of perhaps the second magnitude, and a few whose brilliance was considerably less dazzling. By August 12, when the Theatre, "re-fitted, re-painted and ornamented" again opened its doors, the enterprising managers had just about exhausted the list of available stars. Ellen Tree, Forrest, Celeste, Charles Mason, Love, Marble, J. R. Scott, the Barretts, the Slomans, and Burke—the array was rather imposing. And who was left? The partners, having become convinced by a survey of the theatrical horizon, that there were virtually no attractions available, resorted, as I said, to another kind of appeal.

If, however, they lacked stars, they were fortunate in having a stock company of unusual merit. To those who had taken part in the summer were now added: Mrs. Richard Russell, mother of Mrs. Farren and widow of the late manager of Boston and New Orleans theatres, who, it will be recalled, Ludlow says, proved in her later years "very effective in soubrettes and handsome widows"; Joe Cowell, the well-known English comedian; and his gifted daughter Sidney, who was before the company departed for the South to marry Bateman, and later to become the mother of the famous Bateman sisters and author of the popular satirical comedy *Self*; and "Young Joe" Cowell, the scene painter. The com-

plete roster of the company as announced in the *Republican* of August 8, follows: *Organization*: Lessees and Managers, N. M. Ludlow and Sol Smith; Stage Manager, George P. Farren; . . . Dramatic Performers, Messrs. Sol Smith, Farren, Joseph Cowell, Sr., Bateman, Larkin, Marsh, McConnechy, Burns, Henry, Archer, Davis, Rose, Duff, Smythe, Schinotti, Jones; Mrs. Farren, Mrs. Russell, Mrs. Madden, Miss Sidney Cowell, Mrs. Henry, Miss Meyrer, and Mrs. Spears. This aggregation proved itself very soon to be a strong one.

The first week Smith devoted to introducing his new recruits, using some of the standard old comedies. For the opening night *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* and *The Poor Soldier* were selected. In the former Farren played Don Caesar; Bateman, Don Julio; Mrs. Farren, Donna Olivia; and Mrs. Russell, Minette; in the latter Larkin was the Patrick, "with songs," and Smith the Darby.¹ The next evening he presented *Town and Country* with Cowell as Kit Cosey and his daughter as Rosalie, Mrs. Farren playing the Hon. Mrs. Glenroy; and Marsh, Reuben; the afterpiece was *The Critic*, Smith as Puff, Cowell as Don Whiskerandos, and Miss Cowell as Tilburina.² There followed *The Farmer's Story*, with the Farrens and Bateman, and *The Turnpike Gate*, with Cowell singing comic songs as Crack, Farren as Joe Standfast, Miss Cowell as Mary, and Mrs. Russell as Peggy. On Thursday *Speed the Plough* ("curtains to rise at a quarter before 8 o'clock") was cast: Sir Abel Handy, Farren; Sir Philip Blandford, Marsh; Bob Handy, Bateman; Farmer Ashfield, Cowell; Miss Blandford, Mrs. Farren; Susan Ashfield, Miss Cowell; and Lady Handy, Mrs. Russell. Afterward, Cowell essayed Simon in *The Rendezvous*. The *Republican* of August 15 observes that the "evenings are now cool, which renders crowded houses more agreeable." It is clear

¹ *Daily Eve. Gaz.*, August 12, 1839.

² *Daily Mo. Rep.*, August 13, 1839. Subsequent casts are taken from later issues of the same paper.

from its remarks that Smith had altered Sheridan's text in *The Critic* to fit the present situation, for it says: "Old Sol made some very happy hits, in his 'puffs' the other night, as he usually does when he undertakes originality." A writer, who signed himself "Clifford," in the *Gazette* of August 16 reviewing the performances staged so far, accorded the Farrens high praise, though he thought she was miscast on the first night. He also liked Bateman in *The Farmer's Story*—"he was a thorough bred loafer to the life"—and could not say enough in commendation of Cowell's Crack. From his description of Miss Cowell I shall quote, since it may give us some conception of the young woman's personality and acting. "Her clear and distinct voice, her innocent and beautiful face, her youth, and her perfect ease on the stage will be certain to win her the esteem of all."

On Friday *Victorine* or *The Orphan of Paris*, which had been played once just before the theatre closed, was now shown a second time. According to the advertisement in the *Republican*, it was cast as follows: Felix, Marsh; Jean, Farren; Griffon, Henry; Julian, Miss Cowell; Victorine, Mrs. Farren; Therese, Mrs. Russell. After it, Cowell played Gregory Grizzle in *My Young Wife and Old Umbrella*, a farce which achieved seven performances before the December closing. Of this bill, I have found no critique.

On Monday, August 19, Smith came forward with the first of his spectacular productions, *The Jewess* or *The Council of Constance*, which, the advertisement declares, had "been several months in preparation." It featured "new SCENERY, DRESSES, MUSIC and DECORATIONS" and "THE FREE LIST, with the exception of the press, is suspended." The cast of this work, which is familiar today only in its operatic form, was as strong a one as the firm could muster. Farren assumed the gabardine of Eleazar. His wife was the Rachel; Mrs. Russell, the Princess Theodosia; Miss Cowell, the Abigail; Cowell, the John Forrester; Bateman, the Leopold; and Marsh, the Car-

dinal.³ Of the artistic success of this piece, there would seem to be little doubt. Both papers were lavish in their praises. The *Republican* of August 22 says:

The scenery and dress are superior to anything yet presented on the St. Louis boards. We thought Cinderella an effort not easily surpassed, but this is a step beyond that. The actors and actresses, with few exceptions, perform their parts well. Mrs. Farren, as the Jewess, is inimitable: the character could not be better filled by anyone. She looks, speaks and plays in every position, the whole character. . . . Too much praise cannot be bestowed on the scenery, which is gorgeous and beautiful, and the Managers deserve a full recompense for their trouble and expense in getting it up. Nothing could be more complete than the view of the interior of the Cathedral, or better conceived than the banquet, or better executed than the grand procession.

It is true, some of the lesser actors were but "so-so" and some of the "supers" seemed incurably awkward, but, "take the piece altogether, it is decidedly superior to anything yet presented." The papers reported good houses, and before the end of the season the spectacle had run to the astonishing number of thirteen performances. Of these, six were consecutive in its first week. The first three evenings it appears to have stood alone on its own merits; the next three, it was preceded by familiar farces.

But *The Jewess* was not "Old Sol's" only trump. He had others in his hand, and he proceeded to play one while the success of the first was still fresh. This was the "Grand Drama" of *The Lady of the Lake*, which took the stage August 26. The greater part of a column in each paper is occupied by the elaborate advertisement which described in detail and lurid rhetoric each of the eleven scenes, and if these scenes even approached in splendor the glories promised, the production must certainly have rivaled anything St. Louisans had seen before.⁴ The rôle of James Fitz-James fell to the lot of Bateman, and his future wife, Sidney Cowell, played opposite him as "the fair Ellen," while Mrs. Farren assumed

³ *Ibid.*, August 20, 1839.

⁴ *Ibid.*, August 28, 1839.

the tragic rôle of Blanche of Devan. To Marsh, the company's "heavy man" naturally went the part of Rhoderic Dhu. Farren played Douglas and Cowell, John of Brent. I should think the summer-beset citizens would have thronged to the "Temple of Thespis" to try to imagine themselves, thanks to the scenery of Cowell and Schinotti, in the cool Scottish mountains, for on the day of the opening the *Republican* averred that the day before the heat had been so "piercing" that "great alarm pervaded in town yesterday, lest the thermometers should run over." After the second performance, the *Republican* asserted that "this beautiful drama 'takes' better than the Jewess, even, did. The scenery reflects great credit upon Mr. Cowell, and the manner in which most of the company 'play their parts' reflects equal credit." The melodrama ran for five consecutive nights, and then was later accorded four additional performances.

The month of September witnessed repetitions of a number of popular pieces, among them *Black-Eyed Susan*, in which, on the second, the "Kentucky Comedian" M. S. Waters, whoever he was, played William, with a sailor's hornpipe; *The Two Gregories*, in which the same individual was Gregory "with a song," Farren as Mr. Gregory and Mrs. Farren as Fanchette; and *The Young Widow* with the Kentuckian as Splash. In *The Gambler's Fate*, on September 4, Marsh had an opportunity to show what he could do with Albert Germaine, Farren playing Old Germaine; Cowell, Baalamb; and Mrs. Farren, Julia. In the afterpiece, Buckstone's *The Irish Lion*, Larkin began as Tom Moore a series of Irish characterizations, probably in the hope that he might turn into another Tyrone Power. *Lacy's Love and Reason*, on the sixth, was produced with the following cast: General D'Orlon, Farren; Albert, Marsh; Vincent, Bateman; Dingle, Sol Smith; Alice, Mrs. Farren; Mrs. Dingle, Mrs. Russell. Of the success of this novelty, there is no report available. After it Joe Cowell, Sr., and Larkin sang the songs of Caleb Quotem and Loony, respectively, in *The Wag of Windsor*. The advertise-

ment in the *Republican* (September 9) had a touch of novelty. It was for the first performance of *Married Life*, a comedy, the title of which elicited several bromidic jokes from the editors.

MARRIED LIFE

Mr. and Mrs. Coddle.....	Mr. Farren and Mrs. Russell
Mr. and Mrs. Lynx.....	Mr. Marsh and Miss Cowell
Mr. and Mrs. Dove.....	Mr. Cowell and Mrs. Henry
Mr. and Mrs. Younghusband.....	Mr. Bateman and Mrs. Farren
Mr. and Mrs. Dismal.....	Mr. Smythe and Mrs. Madden

The *Gazette* declared afterward that it "went off admirably." "It is a laughable affair and is sustained with capital spirit by the company." It was evidently relished by the public, too, for it had five additional performances.

Friday the thirteenth was selected for the first night of Ferry's drama *Charlotte Temple*, doubtless adapted from Mrs. Rowson's very moral novel of the same name. Of course, Mrs. Farren was the hapless heroine; Marsh played Belcour, and Bateman, Montraville. Then, the next evening, by way of contrast, Smith brought forward Cowell as Jerry Hawthorne in the long-popular "burletta" of *Tom and Jerry* or *Life in New York*, a rôle he had created at the Park Theatre in New York sixteen years before. The Tom of this later date was Bateman; Farren played Logic; Miss Cowell, Kate; and Mrs. Farren, Jane. To whose lot fell the virtuous Sue, the notice, oddly enough, does not say. To insure his audience a "real evening," after this piece, "Old Sol" himself took the boards in *John Jones of the War Office*.

The following Wednesday, September 18, appeared the first bona fide star of the fall season—and not a particularly bright one at that—J. S. Balls, a light comedian, as the *Gazette* had it, "of some celebrity." He made his first bow as Gossamer in *Laugh When You Can* supported by Farren as Bonus, Bateman as Delville, Marsh as Mortimer, Cowell as Sambo, Mrs. Farren as Mrs. Mortimer, and Miss Cowell as Emily. To this he added Splash in *The Young Widow*, the

Aurelia being Miss Rachel Stanard. Can this have been the lady whose age Ludlow had deplored four years before? There were then two n's in the name. She was by this time within a few months of forty, a bit advanced for young widows. But this one did not "come dear"; according to the firm's letter-book, she was to get seventeen dollars a week and a benefit.⁵ By this time the weather was chilly and wet. Balls lingered at this time about a week, playing Vapid in *The Dramatist*; Frederick in *The Buckle of Brilliants*; Tangent in *The Way To Get Married*; six characters in *Win Her and Wear Her*; Ready in *Maid or Wife?* Rover in *Wild Oats*; Sir Alfred High-flyer in *A Roland for an Oliver*; Narcissus Fritzfrizzle in *The Dancing Barber*; Lackland in *The Travellers*, in which he sang "Bucks, Have at Ye All!"; and Darnley in *Darnley* or *The Free Booter*—an assortment which should certainly have revealed his capacity for making fun. Apparently he did pretty well since the *Gazette* reported (September 21): "Our stage presents nightly, an assemblage of attractions, which draw full houses"; and two days later the *Republican* corroborated this with: "Mr. BALLS draws the tallest kind of houses, as his merits well deserve." The former sheet added this observation "We don't think 'a heap' of the Paducah Star [Miss Stanard]; but we commend the vivacity of Balls, the droll earnestness of Cowell, the solemn drolleries of Farren; the sprightliness and gleesome frolic of Mrs. Farren and the archness of Miss Cowell. There never has been so good a company at our Theatre."

Immediately after the conclusion of Balls's season, Smith staged the third of his melodramatic spectacles, Buckstone's *The Ice Witch* or *The Frozen Hand*, according to Dr. Odell a Scandinavian version of the Tannhäuser story.⁶ The spectacle appears to have been even more overwhelming than *The Jewess* and *The Lady of the Lake*. As usual, the editors had to

⁵ Ludlow and Smith to Miss R. Stanard, September 3, 1839, *Ludlow & Smith Letter Book*, Smith Collection.

⁶ Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, III, 571.

cast about for superlatives. The *Republican* declared (September 28) after the second performance that it would not attempt to describe it; "it is too gorgeous and too splendid for any description to do justice to it." As for Joe Cowell Jr.'s scenery:

If we compare his execution in this instance with the representation of the piece in the eastern cities, we have the word of several gentlemen for saying that for accuracy, elegance and effect, it has never been surpassed. . . . The last scene where the transition is from the cold and ice bound dominions of the Ice Queen to the warm and glowing powers of the Sun God, the effect is so sudden and apparently so magical, that no just conception can be formed of it, except by witnessing.

Excellent too, according to the same judge, was the acting. For the Sun God, Smith brought his ten-year-old son Marcus, later the famous comedian Mark Smith, from St. Louis University.⁷ Bateman played Harold; Marsh, Grutnioff; Cowell, Magnus Snoro; Mrs. Russell, the Ice Witch; Miss Cowell, Norna; Mrs. Farren, Minna; Mrs. Henry, Ulla; and Miss Stanard, Hecla.⁸ Whether or not George Farren was assigned the part of Sweno which had been his in the original New York production, neither Smith nor the papers reveal. The former declares that, like *The Lady of the Lake*, "the piece was weak in its attractive powers." Yet it was put on ten times within the next two weeks, and twice more during the season. On the first Saturday of its run, a children's performance was given, and *The Ice Witch* was given first for the sake of the youngsters; since the curtain was now rising at half-past seven, they could probably, if their parents did not keep them to see Cowell in *The Review*, still get to bed at not too unreasonable an hour.

In the middle of October Dan Marble returned for two engagements. He went through his usual Yankee repertory, adding a few characters in which St. Louis had not yet had

⁷ Smith, *Theatrical Management*, p. 141.

⁸ *Daily Mo. Rep.*, September 27-28, 1839.

the fun of seeing him: Major Jack Downing in *Life in New York* "originally performed at the Bowery Theatre, New York, with great success—altered and adapted to the present times, by Mr. Farren, and the character of the Major was written to suit the peculiar powers of Mr. Marble";⁹ Hezekiah Homespun in *Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf*—Bateman being the pirate; Miss Cowell, Theodore; a Mr. Herbert, Major General Andrew Jackson; Mrs. Farren, Constantia; and Larkin, Moll McCruiskeen—and Jerry Mayflower in *The Plains of Chippewa*. The *Republican* of October 24, in commenting on the benefit of Bateman scheduled for that evening, asserted that Marble would appear in both the last-named patriotic play and *Nick of the Woods*; but the advertisement omits his name from the cast of the latter, giving only Bateman and Mr. and Mrs. Farren, who were to impersonate Roaring Ralph Stackpole, Nathan Slaughter, and Edith Forrester. More interesting was the comedian's attempt at a tragic rôle for his farewell benefit, when, after Deuteronomy Dutiful in *The Vermonter*, he played Carwin in *Therese*, Mrs. Farren being the Therese and Miss Stanard, the Countess. This essay on the part of a man identified almost wholly with Yankee character parts comes rather as a surprise, but it was as a tragedian that he originally aspired to fame.¹⁰

In *Rob Roy*, revived for McConechey's¹¹ benefit, a Mr. McDougall accomplished his local début as Bailie Jarvie, singing a comic song. What is more, Miss Stanard not only played Diana Vernon but executed a broadsword and an "Austrian hornpipe" dance! What had his St. Louis audiences done to "Old Sol" that they should be made to suffer this? Perhaps there was an antidote in the new afterpiece

⁹ *Ibid.*, October 18, 1839.

¹⁰ Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, p. 683.

¹¹ This man's name, like Shakespeare's, seems to have been susceptible to all manners of spelling. I here copy from the advertisement. Smith in writing it omitted the second "c."

Does Your Mother Know You're Out? with Bateman and the Cowells.

On November 4, Balls again bobbed up and stayed through the sixteenth. In addition to some of the comedies in which he had taken part before, he now tried Belcour in *The West Indian*; Rafael in *Rafael, the Libertine*; Claude Melnotte and Pertinax Single; Goldfinch in *The Road to Ruin*; Rostrum in *Secrets Worth Knowing*; Charles II; Tom Tape in *The Englishman in India*; and Alphonso in *The Hooded Bridegroom*—a more varied set of characters than those in which he had appeared during his earlier engagement. In all these rôles he was supported by the full company, the only new name appearing in the advertisements being that of Mrs. Bateman—Sidney Cowell had married Bateman, November 11. None of the casts need be given in detail, but it is worth noting that it was at this time that Mrs. Farren first essayed Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons* and that Bateman played Old Dornton in *The Road to Ruin*.

The season was now running beyond the limits originally set by the managers and indeed by the St. Louis climate. But Mobile, after undergoing the fearful ravages of a yellow fever epidemic, had, on October 7, suffered a terrible fire, which had destroyed, among many other buildings, the theatre in which Ludlow and Smith were about to open their winter season. The *Gazette* of October 23 reported that they had "sustained a loss of \$12,000." There was, therefore, nothing for Smith to do but hold on in St. Louis, where at least he had a theatre, until Ludlow could find some place to press into service in the southern city. But the season had been a long and a heavy one, and soon an exceptionally early winter descended upon them. Smith asserts that the firm lost \$100 to \$150 a day,¹² and this despite the fact that he availed himself of every possible pulmotor to keep life in the dying season.

The latter half of November, with the thermometer dropping steadily, was devoted to featuring the tragedian E. S.

¹² Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

Conner, years before one of Ludlow's leading men, and Amelia Fisher, less famous sister of Mrs. Maeder. The former was first seen as Cardinal Richelieu in Bulwer-Lytton's celebrated drama, which on that occasion St. Louisans enjoyed for the first time. This is an interesting instance of the far western city's witnessing a famous play within a few months of its first performance, Macready having produced it in London the previous March, and Forrest in New York in September. The St. Louis cast was made up, in addition to the star, of Marsh as Baradas, Bateman as Mauprat, Farren as De Beringhen, Smythe as Joseph, Mrs. Bateman as Francois, and Mrs. Farren as Julie.¹³ Both the *Gazette* and the *Republican* applauded the play and the acting. "This admirable play," said the former, "—which may be considered one of Bulwer's happiest efforts—was performed at our Theatre, last night [November 18], to a larger attendance than has been present for some time. Mr. CONNER, as the Cardinal, was highly successful, and justly merited the hearty applause bestowed upon him." The *Republican*, rather more cautious, observed that he was "pretty well sustained." The piece was repeated two nights later, and again on the twenty-eighth.

November 19, while Conner rested, those of the public who could be lured to the chilly theatre in which stoves had now been installed were regaled with a strange bill. Larkin disported himself as Tom Moore and Mrs. Farren "executed a concerto on the piano" in *The Irish Lion*, and Dempster, a singer, gave a number of songs, before Mrs. Farren and Cowell concluded the evening with *The Rendezvous*. The next night Miss Fisher accomplished her debut as Virginia to the Virginius of Conner; originally engaged for the Mobile season, to play "*Chambermaids*, boys, *Second Comedy*, Juvenile Tragedy, and other respectable business, such as (in some instances) the better Sentimental Ladies in Comedies,"¹⁴ this

¹³ *Daily Mo. Rep.*, November 18, 1839.

¹⁴ Ludlow and Smith to Miss Amelia Fisher, August 26, 1839, *Ludlow & Smith Letter Book*, Smith Collection.

young lady had been successfully diverted to St. Louis.¹⁵ Having displayed her talents for tragedy and pathos in the Knowles *opus*, she showed in the afterpiece, *Winning a Husband*, in which she played Catharine, what she could accomplish in the way of farce. This bill over, Conner was incapacitated by a severe cold, and she played Phoebe in *Paul Pry* as a curtain-raiser to Mrs. Farren's *Victorine*. By Saturday, the male star was ready for Claude Melnotte, and Miss Fisher repeated her *Catharine*.

Conner ushered in his second week with a new play, *Tortesa the Usurer*, by Nathaniel Parker Willis. This piece, first presented to New York a trifle less than eight months before and one of the most ambitious examples of early American poetic drama, was favorably received at least by the *Gazette*, despite the fact that the critic made no effort to conceal his hearty dislike for the author, whom he called "a finical and dainty spotter of pure white paper . . . whose occasional affectations you cannot but despise and whose frequent puppyisms you often feel in a mood to kick outdoors."¹⁶ Elegant dramatic criticism that! Conner himself played Angelo; Farren, Tortesa; Cowell, Tomaso; and Miss Fisher, Zippa; and Mrs. Farren made a deep impression as Isabella. As an afterpiece *The Weathercock* was added with Conner as Tristram Fickle. But the audience needed no weathercock to remind it of the vagaries of the climate. Here it was, not yet December, and the ground was covered with snow and the thermometers were touching zero. Sol must have thought fate against him. He wanted to call a halt and scheduled his farewell benefit, "last night of the season," for the last night of the month, leaving only time for Conner to play Damon and also Tom in *The Star Spangled Banner*, and to repeat *Tortesa*, *Virginus*, and *Richelieu*.

The benefit was doubtless a worthy affair. Conner volun-

¹⁵ It is possible that the performance of this bill as announced was prevented by Conner's ill health, but, if so, I have found no mention of the fact.

¹⁶ *Daily Eve. Gaz.*, November 29, 1839.

teered for William in *Black-Eyed Susan*, "Old Sol" and Mrs. Farren played the comedy of *Alice*, and *The Hypocrite* was given somehow with two Mawworms—Smith and Cowell. Writing some days later (December 2) the editor of the *Republican* reported: "Mr. SMITH's benefit, on Saturday last, was indeed a good one, and must have been gratifying to his feelings. The weather was *cold* and damp, and the walking horrid, but still a crowded house greeted our worthy manager. . . ."

It is too bad "Old Sol" could not then and there have written finis, but the end was not yet. Monday morning the readers of the *Republican* learned that "in compliance with the general wish of the audience on Saturday evening, the Theatre will re-open one night for Mrs. Farren's benefit." Again Conner volunteered his services and again *Tortosa* was repeated, Bateman replacing his father-in-law on short notice. But even that was not enough—there was still no place for the company in Mobile. So Smith held on. The curtain was now rising at seven, and fires were blazing in the parquet. Conner departed, and *The Lady of the Lake* and, it would seem to me most cruelly, *The Ice Witch* were revived. Then for the last six days came the two Clines, Herr André, expert and reputedly graceful performer on the *corde élastique*, and T. S., an actor of no great consequence. The former, observes Ludlow, was no German but "an English Jew, whose name was John Cline";¹⁷ "*corde élastique*" was an early Victorian euphemism for the more prosaic "tight-rope." Whatever he was, Smith had, in his extremity, sent for him, haste, posthaste, from Cincinnati. The other was also an Englishman, but whether or not a relative I do not know. Herr Cline performed nightly on his *corde élastique* and his namesake played his part in *The Rent Day*, *The Stranger*, *Luke the Laborer*, and *The Charcoal Burner*. The *Republican* (December 7) found T. S. Cline "good," Herr Cline "wonderful." But the people were too cold.

¹⁷ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 368.

At last the end was reached, a final farewell benefit for the managers. Herr Cline volunteered his valuable aid, and "will make a GRAND ASCENSION to the GALLERY." Smith once more played Guy Goodluck in *John Jones of the War Office*. The spectacular acrobat appeared on the elastic cord "in a new ballet of action" and portrayed "the various conflicting incidents in the LIFE OF A SAILOR." And, finally, Mrs. Farren and the other Cline performed *The Charcoal Burner*. The season was over. It left poor Smith, as he wrote his partner three days before the end, "most confoundedly down in the mouth." The Cline houses had brought in but \$121, \$181, and \$126, to defray expenses of over \$300 nightly. In spite of a long and brilliant season, Ludlow and Smith were financially well-nigh prostrated, and ahead they saw but little hope indeed. Yet, however the imps of despondency might beset them at times, they were too gallant troupers to give up the ship as yet. Perhaps they found some consolation in the esteem of their fellows and of the community they served as voiced by the friendly editor of the *Republican* in the editorial which he wrote on the last day of the season and with which I shall bring to a close the present chronicle of their fortunes in the St. Louis Theatre.

As this is the "last night of the season," many friends of the gentlemen have expressed a desire that an opportunity may be given to the public in which some expression of *marked respect* can be given to our worthy managers. As men of respectability, as attentive managers and as citizens, these gentlemen have claims upon this community. That they have maintained a proper character to our theatre no one will gainsay, and that they have catered to the public taste with as great a liberality as could possibly be expected, will also be admitted, and that some particular mark of respect—some expression approbating their course, should be given at the close of a long season, appears to be a duty which the public justly owe them.

CHAPTER XV

BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE

WHEN, on the evening of December 11, 1839, the curtain of Ludlow and Smith's Theatre fell on the final tableau of *The Charcoal Burner*, the St. Louis stage had completed the first quarter century of its varied career. Twenty-five seasons, good, bad, and indifferent, had come and gone since the "young gentlemen of the town" had entertained their friends with *The School for Authors* and *The Budget of Blunders* in the old court house on Third Street. And what a change these two decades and a half had seen. In 1815 St. Louis was a small, crude frontier village. By 1839 it had grown into a thriving metropolis of nearly twenty thousand souls. The frontier had gone, pushed away two hundred and fifty miles to the west where from Independence and Westport Landing the covered wagons were lumbering out on to the plains. In between lay the rich state of Missouri with a population which the census of the following year showed to have reached 381,741.¹ Civilization, the American civilization of Martin Van Buren and Henry Clay, of Washington Irving and Godey's *Lady's Book*, had reached St. Louis and captured it. The pioneer days were gone. Instead, had come "the fabulous forties."

On the eve of this same fabulous decade is the drama in St. Louis. It has come a long way. We saw it begin with the efforts of enthusiastic amateurs in an abandoned smithy, and have escorted Thalia and Melpomene while they have lingered now in a stable-loft, now in an improvised playhouse of logs and planks, now in a quondam salt house. We leave it housed in a real theatre, one which was good enough to be

¹ Official census printed in journal of the Missouri House of Representatives, 1840.

ranked among the handsomest in the country, where St. Louis audiences could, if they were so disposed, see recent New York and sometimes even London successes performed by some of the leading actors of the day. Whatever might be its vicissitudes in the future, the local drama had passed out of its pioneer stage and had become firmly established in St. Louis.

During its early years, the theatre evidently derived its chief support from the so-called best elements in town. So much is made clear by the names of those who promoted and encouraged it, men of position and leaders in the civic life of the young community. Yet the contributions of the French citizens were negligible, and of the Spanish nil. By this I do not mean that the former did not support the drama by their attendance. I do mean that in its development they apparently took little active part. The names of those who did so reveal men almost wholly of English or Irish stock, Kennerly, Price, Hempstead, Henry, and Clark. Charles Keemle was of Dutch origin.² The only Frenchman whose name appears in the record is René Paul, who translated *Jodolet* for Ludlow and Smith. Later the Germans took a hand, but not until after 1840. On the whole, I think the St. Louisans supported the theatre as well as did the public of the average American city. Of course, complete statistics are wanting, but one has only to glance through the memoirs of the various American managers to see that the dollars did not always flow into their coffers. On the whole, St. Louis, it seems to me, did its part. It certainly began its stage career under difficulties. The town was never really large, and, until the middle thirties when it was crowded with emigrants headed for the West, the support of the theatre must have depended upon a comparatively small number of persons. Furthermore, during a great part of the time at least, custom seems to have debarred most of the women from attendance.

Playgoing in those days was not without its perils, or at

² Edward's *Great West*, p. 171.

least inconveniences, and the "females" were, or were supposed to be, peculiarly susceptible to shocks. In this respect, there is no evidence that the St. Louis theatres were worse than those of other cities. The almost puritanical Ludlow and Smith took particular pains to assure good behavior in their establishments. The third tier was not permitted to become a rendezvous for undesirables, and any individuals who made themselves obnoxious were excluded. It is true that in 1844 Macready found the audience "much more decorous, attentive, and appreciative than I have heretofore found them."³ The implications are not flattering, but at least he encountered no riot such as endangered his life in New York five years later. That there were occasional disturbances in the St. Louis theatre is certain. The one aimed at Eliza Petrie by the adherents of the Bennies, the dancers, in 1837, will be recalled, and also the one reported to the managers by Mat Field during his regency; but there appears to have been none of really serious proportions.

In opening this chapter, I observed that the twenty-five years covered in this volume had witnessed great changes in St. Louis. In this connection a question which naturally presents itself is whether or not during that period there was manifested any great change in the types of plays produced in the various buildings which successively served the community as theatres. Is there apparent any shift in popular taste or, better still, any improvement? Such a development would have been interesting had it occurred. Unfortunately, however, I have found no trace of anything of the sort. Year after year productions of the same kinds made up the repertoires of such companies as held the stage. Each season that brought a troupe to town witnessed pretty much the same round of comedies and petit comedies, farces with music and farces without music, melodramas and sentimental dramas, with an occasional work of Shakespeare or Sheridan or perhaps an opera for good measure. As a whole, the average does

³ Macready's *Reminiscences and Diaries* (ed. by Sir E. Pollock), p. 533.

not impress us as very high. Nearly all these pieces, those of Shakespeare, Goldsmith, and Sheridan excepted, have been forgotten, and to the theatre-lover of 1930 the names of the favorite dramatists of 1830 mean nothing. Yet these same plays constituted the repertories of most if not all of the companies in this country at least. And who shall say how imposing our present-day idols will seem to the critical a century hence?

Records are today so far from complete that it is quite impossible to accept them as final, but maimed as the statistics are, they do, I think, reveal certain tendencies. So far as I have been able to determine, it was not until 1820 that any play was repeated in any one year, unless—as is quite possible—*Isabella* was given twice by the Turners in 1818. In 1820, forty-six pieces were given once, nine twice, and one possibly three times. In the following year, there were twenty-four which were offered once, one twice, and one three times. It was really not till 1835, when twenty-five were repeated once and seven twice, that repetition became anything like the general rule. By 1839, however, ninety-four were put on twice or more as compared to sixty-three which were seen but once. The greatest number of performances achieved by any work in a single season was thirteen, the record of *The Jewess* in 1839, *The Ice Witch* being one behind. Table I will show more graphically than words the number of performances given individual plays during each of the twenty-five seasons under our consideration.

Using such data as have survived the century, we can, I think, arrive at some conclusion concerning the types of performance which enjoyed the greatest popular favor. These were, I should say, spectacular productions either melodramatic or musical. Just as the public of the twentieth century have delighted in such extravaganzas and displays as *Chu Chin Chow* and the various editions of the Follies, so those of the first half at least of the nineteenth were entertained by such pieces as *Cinderella*, *The Deep*, *Deep Sea*, *Peter*

Wilkins, The Jewess, and The Lady of the Lake, which not only dazzled the eye but charmed the ear as well—or at least were supposed to. It is not surprising then that the first of these should have been given more than any other, achieving nine-

TABLE I

The figures at the heads of the columns indicate the number of performances; those in the columns, the numbers of plays.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1815.....	7												
1816.....	4												
1817.....	4												
1818.....	13												
1819.....	4												
1820.....	46	9	3(?)										
1821.....	24	1	1										
1822.....													
1823.....	6												
1824.....													
1825.....	6	2											
1826.....	2												
1827.....	35	1											
1828.....	38	1	2										
1829.....		4											
1830.....	22	9											
1831.....	46	8											
1832.....	13	1											
1833.....	4												
1834.....	14												
1835.....	72	25	7										
1836.....	69	34	2										
1837.....	99	31	8	1	1				1				
1838.....	62	43	26	11	5	3	5			2			
1839.....	63	49	24	11	2	4	1		1			1	1

teen performances. Next came *The Lady of the Lake* with sixteen. *The Jewess* reached fourteen; *The Ice Witch*, twelve; *Peter Wilkins*, eleven; and *The Deep, Deep Sea*, seven. Of the productions of this nature these appear to have been the most lavishly staged. It must be observed that, except in the case of *The Lady of the Lake*, these performances were all compressed into one or, at the most, two seasons. There is no evidence of any sustained popularity; yet, at the same

time, so far as existing records show, no other pieces were mounted as many as sixteen times. Elaborately staged too, though less extravagantly, were *The Devil's Bridge*, *The Dumb Girl of Portici*, and *Der Freischütz*. The first of these, beginning in 1821, reached five performances, and the second, beginning four years later, attained eight. *Der Freischütz* was heard but three times, in 1837.

Next in favor were the "petit comedies" and farces, some of them with incidental songs, which served usually as after-pieces and curtain-raisers. *Three and the Deuce*, partly no doubt because of Sol Smith's partiality for the Three Singles, was played fifteen times, the first time in 1820, the last in 1839. Next came *The Rendezvous* and *Perfection* with fourteen performances each, and *The Dumb Belle* and *The Loan of a Lover* with thirteen, the last two coming on the scene in the middle thirties. *Nature and Philosophy*, a novelty in 1830, reached twelve productions, the record also of *No Song, No Supper*, which had first been sung nine seasons before. Musical pieces of possibly a little more substance, *The Swiss Cottage* and *Black-Eyed Susan*, scored fourteen and thirteen, respectively.

Turning now to the non-musical works, we find that *The Soldier's Daughter* and *The Lady of Lyons* appear to have been the most popular, each being given eleven representations. The Bulwer favorite, however, did not enter the lists until 1838, and its many performances during that year and the next may have been due quite as much to the desire of various stars to try their mettle as Pauline and Claude as to any great demand for the comedy. The eleven performances of *The Soldier's Daughter* were scattered over a period of fifteen years. Of the tragedies, including the melodramas with fatal endings, *La Tour de Nesle* led all others with a score of twelve, but it too was a latecomer and should perhaps yield the first place to *Fazio*, which, brought out for the first time in 1832, had ten productions. (In this connection, it should perhaps be observed that the version of *The Jewess* used by Ludlow and Smith rejoices in a happy ending, Eleazar wisely reveal-

ing the identity of Rachel before she is cast into the cauldron of boiling oil.) In just what category to place *The Stranger*, I find it difficult to decide. In tone it is certainly gloomy enough to vie with any tragedy; yet the final curtain leaves the principal characters alive and presumably happy. Whatever its classification, its lachrymose sentimentalities gave it a great charm, and thirteen times, beginning in 1827, it paraded its moral lesson.

In view of the decided preference for comedy to tragedy in general, it may be surprising to find the situation reversed in the case of Shakespeare's works. Among these, the tragedies easily led the field, *Othello* coming first with nine performances, followed by *Hamlet* and *Richard III* with eight each, and *Macbeth* with six. *The Merchant of Venice*, a tragic-comedy, alone of those with happy endings reached seven. The fragmentary *Taming of the Shrew* known as *Catharine and Petruchio* was done six times, as was also *Much Ado about Nothing*. *Romeo and Juliet* was not seen in St. Louis until Charles K. Mason and Mrs. Hamblin played it in 1835, and then achieved but five performances. *King Lear* and *As You Like It* had four each; *Henry IV*, Part I, three; and *King John* and *Twelfth Night*, one apiece.

Of the dramatists whose works were seen and heard "on the St. Louis boards," the most popular, if we may judge by statistics, was unfortunately, not William Shakespeare or Richard Brinsley Sheridan, but John Baldwin Buckstone, there being presented eighty-one performances of twelve of his compositions, all within the last five seasons. Among these pieces were *The Ice Witch*, the farce of *Damon and Pythias*, *The Pet of the Petticoats*, *A Husband at Sight*, *Victorine*, *John Jones of the War Office*, *The Dead Shot*, *The Irish Lion*, and *Luke the Laborer*. Second place goes to Shakespeare with sixty-eight performances of thirteen plays, including *Catharine and Petruchio*, but not the scenes from *Julius Caesar* and *The Tempest* or the burlesques of *Richard III*. Next comes Planché, who, thanks to the vogue of *The Dumb*

Belle and *The Loan of a Lover*, ran up a total of forty-seven productions of seven pieces, and Sheridan Knowles, also represented by seven plays, with forty-six productions. Four dramatizations of Scott's novels achieved thirty-eight performances, of which sixteen were devoted to *The Lady of the Lake* and eleven to Pocock's musical version of *Rob Roy*. Of Sheridan's works there seem to have been but twenty-seven productions, nine each of *Pizarro* and *The School for Scandal*, six of *The Critic*, and three of *The Rivals*. Beaumont and Fletcher were represented by two performances of *Rule a Wife, and Have a Wife*. Massinger did better with seven of *A New Way To Pay Old Debts*. These are the only ones of Shakespeare's contemporaries or immediate successors whose names are mentioned in the records. Of the Restoration and post-Restoration dramatists, Southerne led with five productions of *Isabella*. There were four of Otway's *Venice Preserved*, and two each of Farquhar's *The Inconstant* and of *The Country Girl*, Garrick's diluted adaptation of Wycherley's *The Country Wife*.

In a people so patriotic as the early St. Louisans one might expect to find a preference for works of American authorship. But no such predilection is apparent. The only native writer whose dramatic compositions were presented even comparatively often was John Howard Payne, performances of whose pieces totaled thirty-seven. St. Louis audiences saw eight of his plays. Of these the first was the operatic romance of *Clari*, which was sung first in 1825 and had eight additional performances before the curtain fell on the season of 1838. *Therese*, first offered three years later, that is in 1828, achieved nine performances also, and *Charles II*, eight. 'Twas I was given six times. None of the others got beyond two. Payne's record no other American even approached, not even Dunlap with his translation of *The Stranger*. Five of his pieces were presented nineteen times. Mordecai Noah's *She Would Be a Soldier* or *The Plains of Chippewa* and *The Wandering Boys* were acted four times each, and N. P. Willis' *Tortosa the*

Usurer, three, just before the close of the season of 1839. Save for these, if we except J. M. Field, who was an American only by adoption, no other native playwright was honored by the production of more than one of his compositions. As for Field, unless we ascribe to him the farce *Here She Goes, There She Goes*—and for so doing we have no other justification than the fact that the author signed himself “J. F.”—only three of his little pieces were put on.

As for the plays of purely local origin, they fared even worse. René Paul's translation of *Jodolet* was given four times in 1838. Major Wetmore's *The Pedlar*, and *The Partisan* and *The Hoosier* of anonymous authorship, were seen twice. No other work by a St. Louis writer so far as the records show, was ever repeated.

To my mind, the most interesting thing revealed by the statistics given above is the exceedingly small number of times that individual plays appear to have been presented, not one more than nineteen times in twenty-five years and only one that often. Even taking into account the leanness of certain seasons, I think this fact is surprising. Only the most elaborate spectacles and a few of the farces did the managers dare repeat more than three or four times in one season. The size of the theatregoing population even when the town was filled with emigrants bound for the West did not encourage laziness on the part of the actors. Bills had to be changed daily, and it was a rare one indeed that was not made up of at least two plays. It is true that these were much shorter than those we see today, but, even so, staging them must have entailed unremitting effort. Of the scantiness of rehearsals we have had some evidence. The want of careful and thorough preparation of necessity affected the performances. One of the things I have endeavored to show in these pages was the way in which it did so, and it was to do this that I drew so heavily upon the observations of those who were on hand to see them.

So far as the artistic merits of the performances were con-

cerned, it is, however, obvious that there were very wide differences. The first companies to visit the city were really what Ludlow termed "gagging" troupes or groups of "barnstormers" as we should call them today. Individual actors of ability, like Mrs. Turner, Mrs. Groshon, Ludlow, Smith, and the Drakes, were not unknown in these aggregations, but most of the players almost certainly were, as Ludlow frankly confesses of his early followers, little if anything more than the crudest tyros who were more at home in less romantic occupations. Even the more talented individuals just referred to were probably, during this period at least, not remarkable for their attainments. In the aesthetic gloom of the frontier, the light of Mrs. Turner's "genius" blazed, as did also that of Mrs. Groshon. But in the Eastern theatres, in the presence of real competition and more discriminating audiences, these beacons dwindled to little candles which, unlike Portia's, did not throw their beams very far. Mrs. Groshon did not live to return to New York for another attempt. Mrs. Turner did, but her appearances were made in the Lafayette Amphitheatre and at the Bowery, not at the Park, and she seems to have been intrusted with only the less important rôles.⁴ Ludlow, although he was no doubt a capable comedian, was better known as a manager, and Smith, who when he first visited St. Louis was little more than a novice, never contended very seriously for honors in the Eastern centers. The same was true of Aleck Drake. Of his sister Julia, however, we might have had a different story to tell if death had not cut short her promising career. The troupes sometimes brought and sometimes sent by Caldwell were assuredly of a finer caliber, and by 1839 St. Louis playgoers were able to enjoy the performances of a company which was reasonably competent in itself and also capable of providing visiting stars with adequate support. To expect of companies in a city so remote the same quality of achieve-

⁴Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, III, 213, 256 ff., 277, 287 ff., 355 ff., and 361 ff.

ment as was attained by those in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, to which the most gifted players naturally gravitated, would be manifestly unfair. As I see it, the surprising thing is that so much was accomplished.

In the cultural growth of St. Louis, the theatre was an important factor. As a matter of fact, except for the church, it was of those institutions which fostered intellectual development the first on the scene. Before the colleges were founded, before the libraries were opened, before the debating societies and scientific bodies began to encourage the pursuit of studies, humanistic and scientific, the stage was bringing to the St. Louis public, the humor of Goldsmith, the wit of Sheridan, and the splendor and wisdom of Shakespeare's verse. To it almost alone could the aspiring citizens look for intellectual excitement and, indeed, for relief from the drabness and trials of their daily lives—lives which were, I suspect, picturesque only from the safe vantage-point of the twentieth century. Something of the varying fortunes of this theatre during its pioneer years, its successes and its failures, its tragedies and its comedies off-stage as well as on, it has been my purpose in compiling these annals to reveal.

APPENDIX
RECORD OF PERFORMANCES OF
INDIVIDUAL PLAYS

It should be understood that the following does not purport to be a complete list of all the productions of all the plays produced in St. Louis during the first quarter-century of the city's theatrical history. The incompleteness of the records makes the compilation of such a list impossible. Furthermore, much of the information upon which I have of necessity relied was drawn from advertisements printed in the newspapers on the days of performance, and there may have been in some instances last-minute changes of bill of which no evidence has, to my knowledge, been preserved. Some slight confusion has also been caused by the tendency of the managers to seek apparent variety in their repertoires by the occasional use of the subtitles of the pieces to be presented rather than of the names by which they were more generally known. In a few cases the two names of a play appear to have been almost equally familiar to the public, as for instance *Sprigs of Laurel* or *The Rival Soldiers*, *She Would Be a Soldier* or *The Plains of Chippewa*, and the farce *Damon and Pythias* or *The Two Smiths*. In only two or three cases, however, have I thought it necessary to use in the following list more than one name for one play.

Amateur productions are indicated by the use of italics.

	1815
<i>Budget of Blunders, The</i> , 1	<i>Poor Gentleman, The</i> , 1
<i>Fortune's Frolic</i> , 1	<i>School for Authors, The</i> , 1
<i>Heir at Law, The</i> , 1	<i>Who Wants a Guinea?</i> 1
<i>Hit or Miss</i> , 1	
	1816
<i>Darkness Visible</i> , 1	<i>Killing No Murder</i> , 1
<i>Douglas</i> , 1	<i>Lovers' Vows</i> , 1
	1817
<i>Agreeable Surprise, The</i> , 1	<i>Secrets Worth Knowing</i> , 1
<i>Douglas</i> , 1	<i>Who's the Dupe?</i> 1
	1818
Bertram, 1	George Barnwell, 1
Children in the Wood, The, 1	Henry IV, Part 1, 1

1818—Continued

Intriguing Valet, The, 1
 Isabella, 1
 Mock Doctor, The, 1
 Raising the Wind, 1
 Richard III, 1

Road to Ruin, The, 1
 Tekeli, 1
 'Tis All a Farce, 1
 Yankee Chronology, 1

Jew and Doctor, The, 1
 Revenge, The, 1

1819

She Stoops To Conquer, 1
 Village Lawyer, The, 1

1820

Abellino, 3¹
 Adopted Child, The, 1
 Apostate, The, 1
 Bee Hive, The, 1
 Busy Body, The, 2
 Castle Spectre, The, 1
 Catharine and Petruchio, 1
 Cure for the Heart Ache, A, 1
 Curfew, The, 1
 Darkness Visible, 1
 Douglas, 2
 Dramatist, The, 1
 Dr. Last's Examination, 1
 Farmer, The, 1
 Fortune's Frolic, 1
 Foundling of the Forest, The, 1
 High Life below Stairs, 1
 Honest Thieves, 1
 How To Die for Love, 1
 Intrigue, 1
 Iron Chest, The, 1
 Jealous Wife, The, 1
 Jew, The, 1
Jew and Doctor, The, 2
 Jew and Doctor, The, 1
 King Lear, 1
 Lock and Key, 1
 Love à la Mode, 1
 Lovers' Quarrels, 1
 Matrimony, 1

Midnight Hour, The, 1
 Miller and His Men, The, 2
 Miser, The, 1
 Old Maid, The, 1
 Othello, 1
Pedlar, The, 1²
 Point of Honour, The, 1
 Poor Gentleman, The, 1
 Poor Soldier, The, 2
 Purse, The, 2
 Raising the Wind, 1
 Review, The, 1
 Road to Ruin, The, 1
 Robbers, The, 1
 School for Scandal, The, 1
 She Stoops To Conquer, 1
 Speed the Plough, 1
 Sprigs of Laurel (The Rival Soldiers), 3
 Sylvester Daggerwood, 1
 Three and the Deuce, 2
 'Tis All a Farce, 1
 Tom Thumb, 1
 Tooth Ache, The, 2
 Turn Out, 1
 Turnpike Gate, The, 1
 Twenty Years Ago, 1
 Village Lawyer, The, 2
 Wheel of Fortune, The, 1
 Wives as They Were, 1

1821

Animal Magnetism, 1
 Broken Sword, The, 3

Busy Body, The, 1
 Castle Spectre, The, 1

¹ Ludlow states (*Dramatic Life*, pp. 192-93) that the melodrama was given "two or three times," and later adds that it was acted three times. So far as I know there is no other record.

² The date of this performance of *The Pedlar* (apparently its first on any stage) is quite uncertain. But the play must have been acted either in December, 1820, or during the early months of 1821. See the text, pages 73-75.

1821—Continued

Catharine and Petruccio, 1
 Children in the Wood, The, 1
 Day after the Wedding, The, 1
 Devil's Bridge, The, 1
 Devil To Pay, The, 1
 Fortune of War, The, 1
 Fortune's Frolic, 1
 Foundling of the Forest, The, 1
 Gamester, The, 1
 Jane Shore, 1
 John Bull, 1

Lying Valet, The, 1
 No Song, No Supper, 1
 Pizarro, 1
 Purse, The, 1
 Richard III, 2
 School for Scandal, The, 1
 She Would Be a Soldier, 1
 Sleeping Draught, The, 1
 Speed the Plough, 1
 Tale of Mystery, The, 1
 Venice Preserved, 1

1822

1823

John Bull, 1
Monsieur Tonson, 1
No Song, No Supper, 1

Rendezvous, The, 1
Poor Gentleman, The, 1
Rivals, The, 1

1824

1825

Ambrose Gwinette, 2
 Clari, 2
 Dumb Girl of Portici, The, 1
Fortune's Frolic, 1

Miss in Her Teens, 1
Rivals, The, 1
 Simpson & Company, 1
Soldier's Daughter, The, 1

1826

Mountaineers, The, 1

Who's the Dupe? 1

1827

Aethiop, The, 1
 Belle's Stratagem, The, 1
 Broken, Sword, The,
 Devil's Bridge, The,
 Forty Thieves, The, 1
 Foundling of the Forest, The, 1
 Hamlet, 1
 Henry IV, Part 1, 1
 Honest Thieves, 1
 Liar, The, 1
 Lock and Key, 1
 Love in Disguise, 1
 Macbeth, 1
 Maid and the Maggie, The, 1
 No Song, No Supper, 1
 Paul Pry, 1
 Pizarro, 1
 Poor Soldier, The, 1

Purse, The, 1
 Rendezvous, The, 1
 Review, The, 1
 Rob Roy, 1
 Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, 1
 School for Scandal, The, 1
 Soldier's Daughter, The, 1
 Spectre Bridegroom, The, 1
 Speed the Plough, 1
 Spoiled Child, The, 1
 Stranger, The, 1
 Three and the Deuce, 2
 'Tis All a Farce, 1
 Tom and Jerry, 1
 Town and Country, 1
 Twelve Precisely, 1
 Will, The, 1
 Wonder, The, 1

1828

- Bertram, 1
 Critic, The, 1
 Damon and Pythias, 1
 Day after the Wedding, The, 1
 Duel, The, 1
 Exile, The, 1
 Falls of Clyde, The, 1
 Forest of Rosenwald, The, 1
 Forty Thieves, The, 1
 Foundling of the Forest, The, 1
 Gambler's Fate, The, 1
 Guy Mannering, 1
 Heir at Law, The, 1
 Hypocrite, The, 1
 John Bull, 1
 Liar, The, 1
 Love in Humble Life, 1
 Merchant of Venice, The, 1
 One Hundred Pound Note, The, 1
 Othello, 1
 Pizarro, 1
 Review, The, 1
 Road to Ruin, The, 1
 Seven's the Main, 3
 Simpson & Company, 1
 Snow Storm, The, 1
 Soldier's Daughter, The, 1
 Somnambulist, The, 1
 Spectre Bridegroom, The, 1
 Speed the Plough, 1
 Spoiled Child, The, 1
 Therese, 2
 Tom and Jerry, 1
 Town and Country, 1
 'Twas I, 1
 Wandering Boys, The, 1
 Wanted a Wife, 1
 Will, The, 1
 William Tell, 1
 Young Widow, The, 1
 Zembuca, 3

1829

- Actress of All Work, 2
 Four Mowbrays, The, 2
 Heir at Law, The (scene), 2
 Twelve Precisely, 2

1830

- Adrian and Orilla, 1
 All the World's a Stage, 1
 Ambrose Gwinette, 2
 Bertram, 1
 Charles XII, 1
 Clari, 2
Crockery's Misfortunes, 1
 Damon and Pythias (Banim), 1
 Day after the Wedding, The, 1
 Devil's Bridge, The, 1
 Dumb Girl of Portici, The, 2
 Forty Thieves, The, 1
 Foundling of the Forest, The, 1
 Gambler's Fate, The, 2
 George Barnwell, 1
 Green Eyed Monster, The, 1
 Gretna Green, 1
 Guy Mannering, 1
 Hotel, The, 1
 How To Die for Love, 1
Irish Tutor, The, 1
 Jew, The, 1
 Lady of the Lake, The, 1
 Lancers, The, 1
 Laugh When You Can, 1
 Lear of Private Life, The, 1
 Lottery Ticket, The, 2
 Love in Wrinkles, 1
 Lovers' Vows, 1
 Maid or Wife, 1
 Man and Wife, 1
 Matrimony, 1
 Midnight Hour, The, 1
 Miller's Maid, The, 1
 Much Ado about Nothing, 1
 Nature and Philosophy, 1
 No Song, No Supper, 1
 One Hundred and Two, 1
 One Hundred Pound Note, The, 1
 Pizarro, 1
Poor Gentleman, The, 2
 Promissory Note, The, 1
 Raising the Wind, 1
Robbers, The, 1
 Rob Roy, 1
 Roland for an Oliver, A, 1
 Romp, The, 1
 Rule a Wife, and Have a Wife, 1

1830—Continued

Seven's the Main, 1
 She Stoops To Conquer, 1
 Spoiled Child, The, 1
 Stranger, The, 1
 Therese, 1
 Three and the Deuce, 1
'Tis All a Farce, 1

Touch and Take, 1
 Village Lawyer, The, 1
 Wandering Boys, The, 1
 William Tell, 1
 Wives as They Were, 1
 Zembuca, 2

1831

Antoine the Savage, 1
 Apostate, The, 1
 Bee Hive, The, 1
 Black-Eyed Susan, 1
 Broken Sword, The, 1
 Brother and Sister, 1
 Busy Body, The, 1
 Cataract of the Ganges, The, 1
 Catharine and Petruchio, 1
 Cherry and Fair Star, 2
 Cherry Bounce, 1
 Conquest of Taranto, The, 1
 Damon and Pythias, 1
 Day after the Fair, The, 2
 Deaf as a Post, 1
 Devil's Bridge, The, 1
 Dumb Girl of Genoa, The, 1
 Family Jars, 1
 Fish Out of Water, 1
 Floating Beacon, The, 2
 Four Mowbrays, The, 1
 Guy Mannering, 1
 How To Die for Love, 1
 Hypocrite, The, 2
 Incognito, The, 1
 Innkeeper's Daughter, The, 2
 Irishman in London, The, 1
 Irish Tutor, The, 1

Jane Shore, 1
 Joan of Arc, 1
 Lady and the Devil, The, 1
 Lottery Ticket, The, 2
 Maid and the Magpie, The, 1
 Mogul Tale, The, 1
 Nature and Philosophy, 1
 Of Age Tomorrow, 1
 Paul Jones, 1
 Paul Pry, 1
 Pizarro, 1
 Purse, The, 1
 Rendezvous, The, 1
 Rip Van Winkle, 1
 Rosina, 2
 School for Scandal, The, 1
 Secret, The, 2
 She Would Be a Soldier, 1
 Soldier's Daughter, The, 1
 Sprigs of Laurel, 1
 Stranger, The, 1
 Therese, 1
 Turn Out, 1
 Twelfth Night, 1
 Two Galley Slaves, The, 1
 Two Pages of Frederick the Great,
 The, 1

1832

Black-Eyed Susan, 1
Day after the Wedding, The, 1
 Deaf Lover, The, 1
 Douglas, 1
 Evadne, 1
 Fazio, 1
Lady of the Lake, 2

Much Ado about Nothing, 1
 Perfection, 1
 Rob Roy, 1
'Tis All a Farce, 1
 Venice Preserved, 1
 Wandering Boys, The, 1
Who's the Dupe? 1

1833

Fish Out of Water, The, 1
 Gambler's Fate, The, 1

Honest Thieves, 1
 Somnambulist, The, 1

1834

- Black-Eyed Susan, 1
 Don Juan, 1
 Fazio, 1
 Floating Beacon, The, 1
 Laugh When You Can, 1
 Nature and Philosophy, 1
 Oh Hush! 1
 Paul Jones, 1
 Perouse, La, 1
 Richard III, 1
 Rip Van Winkle, 1
 School of Reform, The, 1
 Shepherd of Derwent Vale, The, 1
 Young Widow, The, 1

1835

- Adrian and Orilla, 1
 Amateurs and Actors, 1
 Animal Magnetism, 1
 Belle's Stratagem, The, 3
 Black-Eyed Susan, 1
 Brigand, The, 3
 Catharine and Petruccio, 1
 Charles II, 2
 Clari, 1
Créole, La, 1
 Crossing the Line, 1
 Day after the Wedding, The, 1
 Dead Shot, The, 2
 Dramatist, The, 1
 Evil Eye, The, 2
 Family Jars, 2
 Fazio, 2
 Floating Beacon, The, 1
Fortune's Frolic, 1
 Forty Thieves, 1
 Foundling of the Forest, The, 3
 Gamester, The, 1
 George Barnwell, 1
 Guy Mannering, 2
 Hamlet, 1
 Happiest Day of My Life, The, 3
 Heir at Law, The, 1
 Honey Moon, The, 1
 Hunchback, The, 2
 Hunter of the Alps, The, 1
 Hypocrite, The, 1
 Idiot Witness, The, 1
 Illustrious Stranger, The, 1
 Inchcape Bell, The, 1
 Intrigue, 2
Irish Tutor, The, 1
 Iron Chest, The, 1
 Isabella, 1
Jew, The, 1
 Jonathan in England, 1
 Lady and the Devil, The, 3
 Lady of the Lake, The, 1
 Luke the Laborer, 1
 Lying Valet, The, 2
 Macbeth, 1
 Maid and the Magpie, The, 1
 Merchant of Venice, The, 1
 Miller and His Men, The, 1
 Miller's Maid, The, 1
 Mischief Making, 3
 Mountaineers, The, 1
 My Aunt, 1
 Napoleon, 2
 Nature and Philosophy, 2
 New Way To Pay Old Debts, A, 1
 No Song, No Supper, 1
 Of Age Tomorrow, 1
 One Hundred Pound Note, The, 1
 One Hundred and Two, 1
 Paul Jones, 1
 Paul Pry, 1
Pedlar, The, 1
 Perfection, 1
 Poor Gentleman, The, 1
 Promissory Note, The, 1
 Rendezvous, The, 2
 Rent Day, The, 2
 Richard III, 1
 Rip Van Winkle, 1
 Robbers, The, 1, and 1 in part only
 Rob Roy, 1
 Romeo and Juliet, 2
 Romp, The, 1
 School for Scandal, The, 1
 School of Reform, The, 1
 Secret, The, 2
She stoops To Conquer, 1
 Soldier's Daughter, The, 2³

³ This would seem to be one of the two pieces finally presented on the opening night of Mrs. Pritchard's engagement. For further information, see the text, page 145.

1835—Continued

Somnambulist, The, 1
 Speed the Plough, 1
 Spoiled Child, The, 2⁴
 Sprigs of Laurel, 1
 Stranger, The, 2
 Thalaba the Destroyer, 1
 Three and the Deuce, 1
 Three Hunchbacks, The, 1
 Tom and Jerry, 1
 Tour de Nesle, La, 3
 Tourists in America, 1
 Town and Country, 1
 Turn Out, 2

Turnpike Gate, The, 1
 'Twas I, 2
 Two Gregories, The, 1
 Venice Preserved, 1
 Victorine, 1
 Water Witch, The, 2
 Weathercock, The, 1
 Wedding Day, The, 2
 Wife, The, 2
 Wild Oats, 1
 Will, The, 2
 Wives as They Were, 1
 Wonder, The, 2

1836

Adelgitha, 2
 As You Like It, 1
 Belle's Stratagem, The, 2
 Bertram, 1
 Black-Eyed Susan, 2
 Blind Boy, The, 1
 Broken Sword, The, 1
 Buried Alive, 1
 Catharine and Petruccio, 1
 Charles II, 1
 Child of Nature, The, 2
 Children in the Wood, The, 1
 Citizen, The, 1
 Country Girl, The, 2
 Damon and Pythias (Banim), 1
 Damon and Pythias (The Two
 Smiths), 1
 Dead Shot, The, 2
 Don Juan, 1
 Douglas, 1
 Dumb Belle, The, 4
 Ellen Wareham, 1
 Evadne, 1
 Family Jars, 1
 Fazio, 1
 Fortune's Frolic, 1
 Forty Thieves, The, 1
 Four Mowbrays, The, 1
 Gambler's Fate, The, 1
 Gamester, The, 1
 George Barnwell, 1
 Gilderoy, 1
 Guy Mannering, 1

Heir at Law, The, 2
 Highland Reel, The, 1
 Honest Thieves, 1
 Hoosier, The, 2
 Hunchback, The, 2
 Hunting a Turtle, 1
 Husband at Sight, A, 2
 Illustrious Stranger, The, 1
 Irish Tutor, The, 1
 Isabella, 2
 Is She a Brigand? 1
 Italian Brigand, The, 2
 Jane Shore, 1
 John Jones of the War Office, 1
 King Lear, 1
 Lady and the Devil, The, 1
 Lady of the Lake, The, 1
 Loan of a Lover, The, 2
 Love and Reason, 2
 Luke the Laborer, 1
 Mad Actor, The, 1
 Maid or the Magpie, The, 2
 Manager in Distress, The, 2
 Married Rake, The, 1
 Miller's Maid, The, 1
 Mogul Tale, The, 1
 Much Ado about Nothing, 1
 My Aunt, 1
 My Neighbor's Wife, 1
 Nature and Philosophy, 1
 New Way To Pay Old Debts, A, 1
 No! 2
 One Hundred and Two, 1

⁴ This would seem to be one of the two pieces finally presented on the opening night of Mrs. Pritchard's engagement. For further information, see the text, page 145.

1836—Continued

- Othello, 2
 Perfection, 1
 Pizarro, 1
 Ploughman Turned Lord, The, 1
 Point of Honour, The, 2
 Raising the Wind, 1
 Rent Day, The, 2
 Richard III, 1
 Rob Roy, 2
 Romp, The, 1
 Rosina, 1
 Sammy Pumper, 1
 She Stoops To Conquer, 2
 Sledge Driver, The, 2
 Soldier's Daughter, The, 2
 Somnambulist, The, 1
 Spoiled Child, The, 2
 Sportsman Deceived, The, 1
 Sprigs of Laurel, 1
 Stranger, The, 3
 Tempest, The (one scene), 1
 Therese, 3
 Three and the Deuce, 2
 'Tis All a Farce, 1
 Tom Thumb, 1
 Tooth Ache, The, 1
 Tour de Ncsle, La, 4
 Tourists in America, 2
 Town and Country, 2
 Turn Out, 2
 Unfinished Gentleman, The, 1
 Victorine, 2
 Virginius, 1
 Weathercock, The, 2
 Wedding Day, The, 1
 Wife, The, 2
 Wife's Revenge, The, 1
 Wild Boy of Bohemia, The, 1
 William Tell, 2
 Wreck Ashore, The, 1
 Young Reefer, The, 1
 Young Widow, The, 2

1837

- Aaron Burr, 1
 Adelgitha, 1
 Adrian and Orilla, 1
 Alberti Contarini, 1
 Animal Magnetism, 1
 Bee Hive, The, 1
 Black-Eyed Susan, 2
 Borrowed Feathers, 4
 Brigand, The, 1
 Brother and Sister, 2
 Brutus, 1
 Caius Silius, 1
 Catharine and Petruccio, 1
 Charles II, 2
 Child of Nature, The, 1
 Children in the Wood, The, 1
 Cinderella, 9
 Clari, 1
 Critic, The, 1
 Crossing the Line, 2
 Damon and Pythias (Banim), 1
 Day after the Feast, The,¹
 Devil's Bridge, The, 1
 Dramatist, The, 1
 Dumb Belle, The, 1
 Dumb Girl of Portici, The, 5
 East and South, 1
 Ellen Wareham, 1
 Evadne, 1
 Forest of Bondy, The, 2
 Four Mowbrays, The, 1
 Freischütz, Der, 3
 Golden Farmer, The, 3
 Guy Mannering, 1
 Hamlet, 1
 Handsome Husband, The, 2
 Heart of Midlothian, The, 1
 Heir at Law, The, 1
 Henry IV, Part 1, 1
 Highland Reel, The, 1
 Honey Moon, The, 1
 Hunchback, The, 1
 Hunting a Turtle, 1
 Husband at Sight, A, 2
 Hypocrite, The, 1
 Idiot Witness, The, 1
 Inconstant, The, 2
 Irish Ambassador, The, 2
 Irishman in London, The, 1
 Irish Tutor, The, 1
 Jane Shore, 1
 John Bull, 1
 John Jones of the War Office, 1
 John of Paris, 2

1837—Continued

- Jonathan Bradford, 2
 King Lear, 1
 Lady's Lark, The, 1
 Liar, The, 1
 Loan of a Lover, The, 2
 Lottery Ticket, The, 1
 Love and Reason, 1
 Lucille, 3
 Luke the Laborer, 1
 Lying Valet, The, 1
 Macbeth, 1
 Man and Wife, 1
 March of Intellect, The, 1
 Marriage of Figaro, The, 1
 Married Rake, The, 2
 Matrimony, 1
 Mischief Making, 1
 Monsieur Tonson, 2
 More Blunders than One, 1
 Mountaineers, The, 1
 Much Ado about Nothing, 1
 My Aunt, 3
 My Fellow Clerk, 2
 My Husband's Ghost, 1
 My Master's Rival, 1
 New Way To Pay Old Debts, A, 1
 No Song, No Supper, 1
 Of Age Tomorrow, 1
 Old Heads on Young Shoulders, 1
 Omnibus, The, 1
 One Hour, 2
 Oranaska, 1
 Othello, 1
 Partisan, The, 1
 Pizarro, 1
 Point of Honour, The, 1
 Poor Soldier, The, 1
 PP, 2
 Presumptive Evidence, 2
 Prize, The, 1
 Promissory Note, The, 1
 Raising the Wind, 1
 Rent Day, The, 1
 Review, The, 1
 Richard III, 1
 Rienzi, 1
 Rival Pages, The, 1
 Robber's Wife, The, 2
 Rob Roy, 1
 Romeo and Juliet, 1
 Savage of the Glen, The, 1
 School for Scandal, The, 1
 Secret, The, 1
 Sergeant's Wife, The, 2
 She Would Be a Soldier, 1
 Simpson & Company, 2
 Sledge Driver, The, 2
 Soldier's Courtship, The, 3
 Speed the Plough, 1
 Spoiled Child, The, 2
 Sprigs of Laurel, 1
 State Secrets, 1
 Sweethearts and Wives, 1
 Swiss Cottage, The, 2
 Teddy the Tiler, 1
 33 John St., 3
 Three and the Deuce, 2
 Tom Cringle's Log, 2
 Touch and Take, 3
 Tour de Nesle, La, 2
 Turnpike Gate, The, 2
 Twelve Precisely, 1
 Two Friends, The, 1
 Two Gregories, The, 1
 Wallace, 2
 Weathercock, The, 1
 Wedding Day, The, 1
 White and Brown, 2
 Wife, The, 1
 Wife's Revenge, The, 1
 Wild Oats, 1
 Wives as They Were, 1
 William Tell, 1
 Woman's Life, 2
 Wrecker's Daughter, The, 3
 Young Brigand, The, 1
 Youthful Queen, The, 1

1838

- Actress of All Work, 1
 Adrian and Orilla, 1
 Aethiop, The, 2
 Amalgamation, 1
 As You Like It, 2
 Athenian Captive, The, 3
 Barrack Room, The, 2
 Bee Hunter, The, 1

1838—Continued

- Belle's Stratagem, The, 3
 Bertram, 1
 Blind Boy, The, 1
 Brigand, The, 2
 Broken Sword, The, 2
 Carline, the Female Bandit, 2
 Catching an Heiress, 7
 Charles II, 2
 Cherry Tree, The, 1
 Children in the Wood, The, 1
 Cinderella, 10
 Clari, 2
 Crighton, 1
 Damon and Pythias (Banim), 1
 Damon and Pythias (The Two Smiths), 6
 Day after the Wedding, The, 3
 Dead Shot, The, 2
 Death Token, The, 2
 Deep, Deep Sea, The, 7
 Don Juan, 2
 Douglas, 1
 Dream of the Future, A, 2
 Drunkard, The (15 Years of Progressive Vice),⁵
 Dumb Belle, The, 1
 Englishman in India, The, 1
 Falls of Clyde, The, 1
 Family Jars, 3
 Fazio, 4
 Flying Dutchman, The, 4
 Forty Thieves, The, 3
 Foundling of the Forest, The, 1
 French Spy, The, 6
 Gamester, The, 1
 Golden Farmer, The, 3
 Grecian Daughter, The, 1
 Grenadier, The, 1
 Gretna Green, 3
 Guy Mannering, 1
 Hamlet, 3
 Handsome Husband, The, 1
 Heart of Midlothian, The, 1
 Honey Moon, The, 1
 Hunchback, The, 4
 Hunter of the Alps, The, 1
 Hunting a Turtle, 1
 Husband at Sight, A, 5
 Idiot Witness, The, 1
 Innkeeper's Daughter, The, 1
 Ion, 2
 Is He Jealous? 4
 Is She a Woman? 3
 Jane Shore, 1
 Joan of Arc, 1
 Jodolet, 3
 John Jones of the War Office, 3
 Kate Kearney, 2
 King John, 1
 Lady of Lyons, The, 4
 Leila, 1
 Loan of a Lover, The, 7
 Lottery Ticket, The, 1
 Love Chase, The, 4
 Lucille, 2
 Lying Valet, The, 1
 Macbeth, 2
 Maid or the Magpie, The, 1
 Married Rake, The, 2
 Mazeppa, 2
 Merchant of Venice, The, 3
 Midnight Hour, The, 1
 Miller and His Men, The, 5
 Much Ado about Nothing, 2
 Mummy, The, 5
 My Aunt, 1
 My Fellow Clerk, 2
 My Neighbor's Wife, 4
 Nature and Philosophy, 3
 New Hotel, The, 1
 New Way To Pay Old Debts, A, 1
 No! 2
 No Song, No Supper, 4
 Of Age Tomorrow, 4
 Olympic Devils, 1
 One Hundred and Two, 2
 Othello, 2
 Our Mary Anne, 5
 Partisan, The, 1
 Perfection, 6
 Peter Wilkins, 10
 Pet of the Petticoats, The, 7
 Pizarro, 1
 Point of Honour, The, 2
 Poor Soldier, The, 3
 Promissory Note, The, 1

⁵ This was not the well-known moral drama *The Drunkard or The Fallen Saved* by William Smith.

1838—Continued

- Raising the Wind, 2
 Rake's Progress, The, 1
 Rendezvous, The, 2
 Rent Day, The, 2
 Review, The, 3
 Richard III, 2
 Rival Pages, The, 1
 Rob Roy, 1
 Robber's Wife, The, 2
 Romeo and Juliet, 1
 Secret, The, 1
 Seven Clerks, The, 5
 She Stoops To Conquer, 1
 Soldier's Daughter, The, 2
 Sonnambulist, The, 1
 Sonnambula, La, 3
 Spectre Bridegroom, The, 2
 Sprigs of Laurel, 3
 Stranger, The, 2
 Sultan, The, 1
 Swiss Cottage, The, 7
 Therese, 3
 33 John St., 2
 Three and the Deuce, 2
 Timour the Tartar, 3
 Tom Cringle's Log, 1
 Tour de Nesle, La, 3
 Tourists in America, 1
 Town and Country, 2
 Turn Out, 4
 'Twas I, 1
 Two Gregories, The, 3
 Two Queens, The, 1
 Venice Preserved, 1
 Venus in Arms, 2
 Victoria, 2
 Village Lawyer, The, 1
 Virginius, 1
 Vision of Home, The, 2
 Wandering Boys, The, 1
 Warlock of the Glen, The, 3
 Ways and Means, 3
 Weathercock, The, 4
 Welsh Girl, The, 1
 What Have I Done? 3
 Why Don't She Marry? 1
 Wife, The, 2
 Wife's Revenge, The, 1
 Wild Boy of Bohemia, The, 1
 William Tell, 1
 Wives as They Were, 2
 Woman's Wit, 3
 Young Widow, The, 3
 Youthful Queen, The, 2
 Zembuca, 2

1839

- Actress of All Work, 3
 Adopted Child, The, 2
 Aethiop, The, 1
 Alice, 1
 As You Like It, 1
 Barrack Room, The, 2
 Bath Road, The, 1
 Belle's Stratagem, The, 2
 Black-Eyed Susan, 5
 Bold Stroke for a Husband, A, 3
 Bold Stroke for a Wife, A, 1
 Brutus, 1
 Buckle of Brilliants, The, 1
 Bush Whacker, The, 1
 Charcoal Burner, The, 2
 Charlotte Temple, 2
 Charles II, 2
 Child of the Wreck, The, 2
 Cramond Brig, 5
 Critic, The, 4
 Crossing the Line, 2
 Damon and Pythias (Banim), 3
 Damp Beds, 1
 Dancing Barber, The, 3
 Darnley, 2
 Day after the Fair, The, 1
 Day in Paris, A, 1
 Dead Shot, The, 1
 Death Knell, The, 1
 Does Your Mother Know You're Out? 1
 Dramatist, The, 2
 Dumb Belle, The, 4
 Englishman in India, The, 1
 Family Jars, 2
 Farmer's Story, The, 4
 Fazio, 1
 Fish Out of Water, 2
 Floating Beacon, The, 1
 Forest Rose, The, 4
 Forty Thieves, The, 2

1839—Continued

- French Spy, The, 4
 Gambler's Fate, The, 2
 Gladiator, The, 2
 Green Eyed Monster, The, 3
 Guy Mannering, 1
 Hamlet, 2
 Hercules, King of Clubs, 1
 Here She Goes, There She Goes, 3
 Honey Moon, The, 1
 Hooded Bridegroom, The, 2
 How To Die for Love, 1
 Hunchback, The, 1
 Husband at Sight, A, 2
 Hypocrite, The, 2
 Ice Witch, The, 12
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